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Medieval Studies

By

G. G. Coulton, M.A.

No. XI,

French Monasticism in 1503


An Abstract of the plea for reform published in that year
by Guy Fouenneau, Abbot of St-Sulpice de
Bourges, mainly in his own words

With an Introduction, and Supplementary Documents

London :

Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent and Co., Ltd.

1915

An illustration of a book cover. At the top, a mountain peak is shown with horizontal hatching. Below the mountain, a pickaxe is positioned diagonally. To the right of the pickaxe is an oval containing a detailed drawing of a beetle. At the bottom, a ribbon banner contains the name 'R.W. LLOYD'. The text 'ex libris' is printed in the center-left area.

ex libris

R.W. LLOYD

Medieval Studies

XI.

FRENCH MONASTICISM IN 1503

An Abstract of the plea for reform published in that year
by Guy Jouenneau, Abbot of St-Sulpice de
Bourges, mainly in his own words

WITH AN INTRODUCTION, AND SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTS

J. JOUENNEAU, 1503
BY

G. G. COULTON, M.A.

AUTHOR OF

*From St. Francis to Dante, Chaucer and his England, A Medieval Garner,
etc., etc.*

London :

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French Monasticism in 1503.

I.

INTRODUCTION.

The Reform of Chezal-Benoît (1479-1516).



THE Councils of Constance and Bâle had cried loudly for monastic reform, and had done much to further it. The last three quarters of the fifteenth century, therefore, saw the formation of several new "congregations" called after great monasteries which first reformed themselves and then drew others into the new movement. St. Justina at Padua, and the great monasteries of Bursfeld, Castel and Melk within the German Empire, became the heads of reformed congregations, each with its own General Chapter. How much was done in this direction, and how much still needed doing, may be read in the illuminating *Liber de Reformatione* of Johann Busch, the friend of Thomas à Kempis. But the shortlived nature even of this great movement is emphasized by Johann Trithemius (Trithemius), himself one of the most distinguished Abbots of the Bursfeld Congregation. He speaks very plainly on the subject in many places; most plainly, perhaps, in a sermon preached before his fellow-Abbots at a General Chapter (*Declamatio ad Abbates*, chap. 5, ed., 1604, p. 875). What effects do we now see, (he asks), from all the famous monastic reforms of the past? "All have fallen from their first estate, and are come either wholly, or for the greater part, to nothing." Even in our own Congregation of Bursfeld, less than eighty years old, some houses have fallen again, and we have reason to fear the fall of others. "In short, so many Religious, of so many different Orders, almost in our own day, have fallen from regular observance, and do daily fall, that even the more recent reforms now seem most time-worn and utterly decayed"—*antiquissimae et abolitae prorsus*. Although this pessimistic judgment receives strong general corroboration from independent evidence, yet we must not forget that several of these monasteries retained a more lasting spirit of reform. When Dean Colet talked of finding some truly reformed monastery wherein to end his days, it was in Italy or Germany that he proposed to seek such a house; and Chezal-Benoît in France, the latest-born of the pre-Reformation Congregations, took its inspiration directly from St. Justina, if not from the German reforms also.

The different French movements for monastic reform are well told from the point of view of a learned and moderate Roman Catholic in the second volume of Imbart de la Tour's *Origines de la Réforme* (1909). In 1483, the most brilliant orator of the clergy complained roundly,

before the King and the Etats Généraux, "every man knows that there is neither rule, devotion, nor religious discipline in the monasteries" (p. 486). In 1493, Charles VIII convoked a general Assembly of the French Church at Tours, which again took for one of its main objects the prosecution of serious monastic reforms. And, meanwhile, a reforming party had gathered consistency within the Benedictine Order itself. In 1479, a monk of noble birth named Pierre du Mas had been appointed to the rich abbey of Chezal-Benoît (*Casale Benedicti*), near Bourges. He at once began there a series of reforms, at great personal sacrifice to himself. He died in 1492, but his successor continued his work. Chezal-Benoît was recognized as a model abbey; and in 1494 the Pope designated its Abbot, with two others, to visit and reform other Benedictine monasteries in France. Three years later, the great abbey of St. Sulpice at Bourges received for its head a monk of Chezal-Benoît, Guy Jouenneaux or Jovenneaux; (in Latin, *Guido Juvenalis*); and in 1499 St. Sulpice formerly pledged itself to adopt the new reforms. A second great abbey in 1500, and in 1502 a third, threw in its lot with Chezal-Benoît. From this time forward these four monasteries virtually formed a new Congregation, and held a yearly Chapter for reform and discipline; in 1505 the Congregation of Chezal-Benoît was formally and legally constituted. It was ratified in 1508 by the Papal Legate after consultation with the University of Paris and many eminent French ecclesiastics; and in 1516 Leo X formally approved the new Congregation, now consisting of five monasteries. The King, who had championed their cause at the Papal Court, now added his own formal approval. If Pope and King had been sincere in pushing church reform even to their own pecuniary loss, the new Congregation might have had a great career before it. But it only succeeded in gaining a temporary footing in four other abbeys of monks and in a few convents of women; by the end of the sixteenth century it was practically dead. How terribly these reforms of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century were hampered by royal and papal politics, and how little came of them in the end, may be read in *Imbart de la Tour*, pp. 500 ff.

This reform of Chezal-Benoît called forth two treatises of great importance for monastic history; the *Epistola Paraenetica* of Charles Fernand, and the little book by Guy Jouenneaux which forms the main subject of the present *Study*. Dom Ursmer Berlière, who has written the fullest account yet compiled of the Chezal-Benoît reform, has disappointingly little to say about the contents of either of these two volumes; or, indeed, about the main historical questions involved in the whole story.¹ Fernand's tract (which is in the British Museum), deals more briefly with the same subjects which are dwelt upon by Jouenneaux. The two men had taught at Paris University together, had joined the reformed monks about the same time, and fought with the same weapons for the same cause. Fernand's younger brother, Jean

1. *Revue Bénédictine*. 1900 and 1901. Dom Berlière does not seem really to have grasped the historical circumstances of the time; his errors in the latter part of these articles are plainly exposed by Dom Paul Denis in his *Le Cardinal de Richelieu et la Réforme des Monastères Bénédictins* (Paris, 1913, p. 116).

Fernand, prefixed to this treatise of Jouenneaux a long poem in which he deals even less tenderly with the unreformed monks than our author himself.

Jouenneaux was born about 1450, probably at or near Le Mans. Like the two Fernands, he acquired some distinction as a Latinist at Paris, and published a commentary upon Terence, several other classical books, and a French translation of the Benedictine Rule which has gone through ten editions (Berlière, *l.c.* 348-353). He took the vows about 1492 at Chezal-Benoit, was elected Abbot of St. Sulpice at Bourges in 1497, and in 1500 was chosen by the Papal Commissary as his coadjutor "to visit and reform the monasteries of Benedictine monks and nuns in France" (*ibid.*, p. 40). He died in 1507. His reforming energies provoked not only passive resistance but active and public opposition: hence the booklet with which we here deal, the *Defence of Monastic Reform*. This was dedicated to the Parlement of Paris, and published in 1503, in answer, (as he himself tells us) to certain protests and attacks upon the reformers, which had been circulated by a champion of the unreformed monks. In order to meet these objections, Jouenneaux describes the state in which the majority of French monasteries then were; and it is this which makes his work so valuable. It describes from within, and with convincing directness, the same state of things which can be inferred from official visitation documents of the Middle Ages, but only by a laborious process of analysis and synthesis. We have here a vivid picture of French monasticism on the eve of the Reformation. Busch and Tritheim show us that the conditions were similar in many parts of Germany; Ambrogio Traversari has left us a similar picture for North Italy. English monasticism, (like English church life in general) was pretty certainly more regular than in these other countries; but in England also the conditions were essentially the same; the differences are only differences of detail. In order to bring this out, I have subjoined the visitation records of three great and typical Norfolk monasteries in 1514; we can thus compare not only one country with another, but also the generalizations of Jouenneaux with the detailed observations of the Bishop of Norwich. Finally, I have subjoined brief extracts from unexceptionable authorities to show that no lasting reform of the French monasteries was found possible, until the Revolution came and swept them away.

The less interesting portions of Jouenneaux's book are here represented only by his own chapter-headings. In other cases, I have given sometimes summaries of my own [in square brackets], but mostly direct and continuous translations from the author's own words. There is a copy of the little book in the British Museum, but apparently in no other public library of the United Kingdom. The reader may be glad to have a full description of it:

REFORMATIONIS MONASTICE VINDICIE.

Title—"A Vindication or Defence of Monastic Reform, lately published by the learned Guy Jouenneaux of the Order of St. Benedict,

and now most diligently corrected by the same author. To be sold at Paris, rue St. Jacques, at the sign of the Pelican." [1503].

The contents of this little book are :

1. Five introductory couplets by the Author.
2. A brief commendatory poem by Jean Fernand, O.S.B.
3. Author's dedication to the Parlement of Paris.

[He proposes to himself, as a model, the Carthusians, Celestines, Observantines and the Reformed Congregations of St. Justina and of Germany, who owe it only to the care of their legislators and reformers that they have not "long ago come to great ruin, as our monasteries have." Charity is now grown cold in the world; heroic remedies are needed, and Jouenneaux reckons confidently upon the support of the Parlement for the reformers. "Gird up your loins, then, most reverend fathers, to fight the battles of the Lord, that after your honest efforts ye may be able to say with St. Paul 'I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith.'"]

4. Second Commendatory poem by Jean Fernand.
5. Original Preface addressed to the Parlement, in which Jouenneaux explains that he is driven at last to frank speech by the shameless falsehoods which are now being published against those who are striving for monastic reform.
6. The main body of the work, divided into three books. All the Author's chapter-headings are here given in full, the more important parts of the book in full translation.

II.

A Defence of Monastic Reform.

BOOK I.

CHAP. 1.—That the paths of Religion, once entered upon, must not be abandoned through fear of labour and of austerer discipline.

CHAP. 2.—Against those lawless [*exleges*] monks who, hunting after subterfuges, assert that there are divers paths for monks to go to heaven ; although in truth one only form or Rule of life is prescribed to them, and they have bound themselves by their vows to follow this.

CHAP. 3.—The reason which withholds monks from amending their ways (*resipiscendi*) is this, that they fear greatly to leave their accustomed paths and to endure hardships, not considering that a strict judgment will fall upon all who indulge in pleasures, and who take their ease in the desert of Religion.

CHAP. 4.—Another cause for their lack of repentance is their forgetfulness of death and judgment, and their want of charity.

CHAP. 5.—A confutation of that feigned excuse put forth by monks, who say that they never thought of such a life [as this reformation] when they entered into the Order : to which are added a few words concerning the abominable sin of private property among monks, and their false excuse in this matter.

[The author points out, in this chapter, that the monk was bound to renounce all private property ; that he might not even claim a pen, or the smallest and most insignificant object, as " his own " ; and that this was one of the essentials of the Rule, from which not even the Pope could give a valid dispensation. Yet these " proprietary " monks seek to justify themselves by pleading their abbot's permission, an excuse which is at variance with plain facts. " For, when they are driven to the last resort, and commanded to restore the money to their abbot, they forthwith lay aside all shame and flatly refuse it ; nay, they are ready to fight the matter at law against their own father [in God]." This is entirely borne out by frequent English visitation records, in which the monks complain that the Abbot does not pay their " pensions," their " seynny-money,"

or the similar stipends which had grown up by illegal custom. Still more significant is the fact that the Visitors generally take the monks' part in these cases; the inveterate abuse, by long usage, had acquired something of the force of law. The distinguished German monastic reformer, Johann Busch (1399-1480), writes most emphatically on this subject. It was one of his main tasks to destroy this system of pocket-money and private possessions, which gave to monk or nun an independence contrary to the whole spirit of the Rule. He writes in one place "If he [the Abbot] would remain 'proprietary,' keeping all his own possessions, *there would be no reformation* [of his monastery]"; and again even more plainly "we have seen this monastery [at Hildesheim], like many others which had formerly been even excellently reformed, decline first to the vice of private property, and then, in consequence of this, to *incontinence and disobedience*, to a dissolute and irregular life." (*De Ref. Monast.*, ed. Grube, pp. 524, 535.)

CHAP. 6.—Of Obedience and Humility.

CHAP. 7.—Of monastic greed, fickleness, curiosity, wandering abroad, and other manners unworthy of a Religious.

[After a page of vague generalities in this chapter, the author proceeds thus:]

But now, among those whose profession and habit would seem to proclaim them monks, many [*plerique*] I grieve to say, have nothing in common [with real monasticism], but heap up for themselves great sums of gold, as though they would fain heap up a mountain of gold, scraping together from all sides whatsoever they can pounce upon, nor ever raising the eyes of their mind from the earth. When perchance we meet such men, they begin forthwith to converse of worldly business, or are all agog for gossip, or break forth into words of unseemly jest [*scurrilia*], altogether unbecoming a Religious; in truth they bear no mark of Religion save in their tonsure alone, and even that is so small that we see plainly how ashamed they are to be known for Religious. Their gait, now hasty and now halting, clearly betrays the fickleness of the inward man; of the [monastic] habit they have scarce a sign, and even that little is hidden, so far as in them lieth, either by a shoulder-knot or by a silken cloak.¹ In brief, this sort of undisciplined monks is more worldly than the very worldling, and it needeth no demonstration to show the folly of such things. You may find some of these men playing games forbidden both by church and civil law, by Pope and by Emperor; yea, and that openly, not without frequent blasphemy and execrable curses; and such men, being of honourable birth, escape all punishment, even though they be public and notorious swearers (not to say, perjurers). Of such men the satirist hath well said: "the censor pardons

1. *Aut axillari nodo aut collari scriceo.* The terms are obscure; but some light is thrown on the latter by a decree of the council of Tortosa in 1429, where the clergy are forbidden to wear "doublets or *collarta* or sleeves of silk." (Ducange.)

the crow, and vexes the dove"; and all just-minded men are well aware how great a scandal is thereby generated. Some, again, frequent the clamours of the chase, galloping after wild beasts upon horses that well-nigh outrun the very greyhounds—those "hounds and slender coursing-dogs" (as the poet writes) whereof the monks fear not to nourish whole packs at the expense of the poor, feeding them on such victuals as are the poor man's right.¹ And, although our blessed father Benedict held in detestation two sorts of monks, the Sarabaites and the Vagabond,² yet in our days there have grown up far more wicked sorts. For at least those Sarabaites lived by their own labour, and those Vagabonds wandered from monastery to monastery; whereas many monks of our time are not content with devouring the patrimony of Christ in idleness, but they live also as though their feet were winged, and you may find them oftener on the road than in their cells. Such monks never visit monasteries, but haunt the taverns; never in one place, but ever running up and down, hither and thither; not only with itching eyes and ears and tongues, but with itching feet also; some of whom, for their swiftness of foot, are popularly styled *Flying Monks*

Well may we cry, with that orator of old time, *O tempora, o mores!* Whither now is thy glory departed, O Order [of St. Benedict] that wast once so glorious? I see myself how their iniquity hath come forth, as it were from fatness, they have passed into the affection of the heart. They have let poverty go; in the place of horny-handed toil, pomp and luxury now reign, and (in the words of the poet) avenge the conquered world. And, because they liked not to have God before their eyes, God hath delivered them up to a reprobate sense. In these men is that word of St. Augustine fulfilled, who saith that, even as he had found none better than those who profited in monastic life, so he had never found worse men than those who had failed as monks. For we may sometimes meet such monks who lack scarce anything that knights have; whether on foot or on horseback, they bear a sword at their side as though they were ready for war.³ Indeed, it irks and wearies me to reveal their abandoned manners; yet these are as open and unconcealed, as though the monks who do these things would grieve unless all men could see them; nay, they would even seem to seek glory in that wherein they beget their own most ignominious shame. But, were I minded to rehearse all these things, which have sometimes come under my eyes, I should make too long a tale of it; since this is a field wide enough for

1. Here, again, the Visitations bear our author out; monks are frequently censured for giving to their dogs the broken meats which were the perquisite of the poor.

2. *Rule of St. Benedict*, chap. I. "But the third sort of monks, (and this a most loathsome sort) is formed by the Sarabaites, who, not being approved by any rule, or taught by experience like gold in the furnace, but being as soft as lead in their nature, and still clinging to this world in their works, do plainly lie to God by their tonsure. . . . The fourth sort of monks is called Vagabond . . . always wandering and never settled, slaves to their own pleasures and to the enticements of gluttony, and in all respects worse than the Sarabaites; of whose utterly pitiful manner of life it is better to keep silence than to speak."

3. Cf. *Collectanea Anglo-Praemonstratensia*, vol. II, pp. 217-220. Some brethren of the monastery of Eggleston had been involved in a fatal affray: the Visitor therefore "strictly forbade the wearing of long knives, whether within or without the monastery." This was in 1497; in 1500 he is still complaining that they have not properly obeyed his inhibition. Similar cases are not uncommon in visitation documents.

the most copious flow of words. Do not these things cry for reform? Answer me, O monk, whosoever thou be, who settest thyself to defend these abominable [*tam nefanda*] faults. Nay, to say the truth, the men who do these things require not wordy rebuke (for which they care little) but rather stripes, and chastisement even to weariness with whips. Can this sort of petty unwarlike tyrants boast that they entered into Religion with the purpose of leading this irreligious life?

CHAP. 8.—Confutation of a certain excusation for sin; also, concerning the unbecoming dress of many monks.

[He here deals with the plea that “when we entered into Religion, we proposed to lead the same life which, in those days, the elder monks in our monastery were wont to lead.” It is not the question, argues our pitiless reformer, what life this older generation of monks *did* lead, but what they *ought to have* led. Only one life is good for a monk, the life prescribed by the Rule; yet no man can assert that such men lived by the Rule, “for great numbers [*magna pars*] of them knew not even the words of the Rule, and many were frequently wandering astray from its precepts, not acknowledging it as their mistress.” He then goes on to describe the indecent dress of many monks, in words which agree closely with Gascoigne’s description in 1450, and Bishop Nicke’s complaints at Norwich Priory and elsewhere (Gascoigne. ed. Rogers, p. 144; Norwich Visitations, ed. Jessopp, pp. 201, 204, 280).]

CHAP. 9.—How monks spin out frivolous reasons to show wherefore they should not be reformed; also, how they have no just ground for complaint if, in their ignorance of the right path, they are now provided with guides.

[This chapter deals with the monks’ plea “that they had never thought a rule of life had been imposed upon them.” Ignorance of the law, (argues our author), has never been a legally valid plea, especially in cases where the accused has only himself to thank for his ignorance.]

CHAP. 10.—No monks can, with health to their souls, either celebrate mass or take the sacrament of penance, so long as they always cling to their private property and refuse to be torn from it; for in this case they are continual breakers of the vow to which their own lips freely consented.

CHAP. 11.—Of the former glory of the monastic name and order, and of the stain wherewith they are now besmirched by many who eat the bread of monasticism.

They who should be the light of the world, do now scatter the murkiest blackness of scandals; so that the name of *Monk*, once so glorious, is

turned to disgrace and to derision, as is plainly proved by many men of the monastic profession. For honest monks are much concerned, if another call them by the name of their profession ; as we may see from that monk who lately brought an action of slander against a secular person, upon the sole ground that this fellow had called him *thou Monk !* Wherein, perchance, they have some ground for indignation, that a man should call them by a name which their life doth so utterly belie. [The author expatiates on the glories of ancient monasticism, especially as recorded in the "Lives of the Fathers," and then proceeds:] From these men [our] covetous monks ought, with shame, to learn the lesson of poverty ; our monks who have renounced the world in dress and in profession, yet not in deed, and who have changed naught of their former conversation. Nay, their household expenses are rather increased than diminished [by the change of profession]. They have as many servants to wait upon them, the same elaboration of meals ; or rather, to confess the truth, they have incomparably more than formerly. Sometimes, from their vessels of glass or earthenware, they eat golden food ; and, (as saith St. Jerome), amid their crowds and swarms of servants they usurp the title of recluses.¹ Those who, before they took the vows, were poor and seemed of slender substance, have no sooner found access to the patrimony of Christ and hunted down by hook or by crook some fat benefice, as they call it, than they forget their former poverty and multiply their servants ; they live the life of Bacchanauls, and become far more intolerable than others who were nursed in affluence ; since nothing is more intolerable than a poor man raised to wealth. Many are unable to forego their former crafts or trades ; the huckster hath but changed his name indeed, and follows his old trade, no longer for mere food and raiment, (as St. Paul biddeth), but in pursuit of greater gains than the children of this world.² Under the title of Religion, they practise unlawful gains, and the honourable name of Christian doth not so much suffer fraud as lend a cloak to fraud. I blush to say this ; yet we must needs thus blush at our own disgrace. We publicly stretch out our hands [for charity] ; we hide our gold under rags ; and (while all men think otherwise of us) we die as rich men, with well-filled money-bags, after living as beggars. We, who ought wholly to have left everything for Christ's sake, that naked we might follow our naked Lord, may too often be found to have heaped up riches in our monasteries so busily that in wealth we might compare with Croesus ; and a single wealthy monk may challenge the fortunes of many rich worldlings. . . .

Why should I make so long a tale ? All follow after covetousness and obey the power of money, striving both with hands and with feet (as saith the proverb) to flee from poverty ; thus they strive, from the least even unto the greatest, from the monk to the priest. Yet, if we are to believe

1. This is fully borne out by surviving monastic records. Very significant are the complaints of disciplinarians and visitors ; still more significant are the numbers of servants which they accept without complaint. At Bury, for instance, the eighty monks had 111 servants *within the precincts*, excluding therefore farm labourers, etc. (Dugdale-Caley, vol. III, p. 161 ; cf. the statistics given by Prof. A. Savine in *Oxford Studies*, vol. I, p. 221.)

2. Church councils and visitors fulminated against such monastic traders, from century to century, with a frequency which betrayed their impotence.

St. Bernard, who may well deserve our faith, labour and retirement and voluntary poverty are the marks of a monk, and those are the very things which daily ennoble monastic life.

CHAP. 12.—Concerning the foolish distribution and the sacrilegious embezzlement of church goods.

CHAP. 13.—How spiritual riches should be sought ; and how the covetousness of monks is the murderer of charity and the root of all evil.

[After describing at length the voluntary poverty not only of the primitive monks but also of ancient philosophers, the author continues :]

But we, laden with gold, profess to follow our naked Lord ; and while, under the pretext of almsgiving, we sit brooding over our former wealth, how can we, who thus faintheartedly cling to our own goods, faithfully distribute the goods of others ? . . . For we may find many professed monks who, though they possess an ample patrimony from Christ, yet give no help to the needy ; nay, there are even many, called falsely by the name of *almoner*, who have no bowels of mercy—I do not say only, for the poor, but even for their own brother-monks, or even for themselves. For, seething with covetousness, they have none of the bond of love, nor any affection of piety even for their Maker. For they are suffered to think of nought but gold and silver, which they are liever to see than the sun. Indeed, we may see that charity is now driven out from almost all monasteries ; wherein some are hungry, and others are drunken ; some are sick of surfeit and others of famine ; one man's head aches for the emptiness of his belly, and another's for his fulness ; some are clothed in frocks woven of fine and slender threads, and lined with outlandish furs ; others die for chill and cold. Some bear the heat and burden of the day, and endure burdens scarce endurable, laid upon their shoulders by their superiors ; others will not touch these burdens with their finger. Some, for very want, are compelled to scrape together by stealth the bare necessaries of life, taking such things by a presumptuous and ruinous venture ; yet the guilt lieth with the wicked pertinacity of those others, who ought to supply their brethren's necessities ; with those men to whom the [poorer] brethren should confidently look for all that they need, instead of taking it by stealth ; by which stealth it cometh to pass that, whereas even boldness hath begun by trembling at the smallest things, yet in process of time all confusion and shame is put away. Whither hath that hospitality now departed, which was so sedulously shown by the patriarchs, which our Lord commended and the Apostles prescribed, and which St. Benedict so clearly commanded ? It is become so utterly strange and foreign to our monasteries, that its very name hath perished in oblivion. Such Hospitality, with her sister Almsgiving, hath bidden a long farewell to our convents ; even though the monks' possessions be not indeed their own, and though they be entrusted with no more than the stewardship of these things.

They should remember the fate of Ananias and Sapphira ; yet these did but retain, through fear, their own possessions, while the monks shamelessly squander the substance of Christ. The monks, by an intemperate judgment, give the goods of the poor to men who are not poor, and, (as one most prudent man hath said) liberality perisheth by liberality—or, to speak more truly, by prodigality. Yet we cannot sufficiently wonder what potion hath so bewitched these professors of Religion, that they, whom the sentence we have quoted from St. Bernard shows to be dedicated to voluntary poverty, should so eagerly and so unceasingly rake money together ! For you may see monks in the administration of “country benefices,” as they call them,¹ (monks who, living in little separate communities of two or three persons, become, if we are to believe St. Bernard, mere synagogues of Satan)—you may see such so busy and assiduous in their chase after even the smallest gains, that they far outdo secular folk. And thus, stuffed fat with gold, they go at last the way of all flesh, and their abbots inherit their savings, which succession the owners were far from desiring while they yet lived. Wherefore² then are they so busy with these things as to leave no stone unturned by avarice and by iniquitous cupidity ? The reason, methinks, is herein, that they may have wherewith to feed their pleasures ; for the use of riches is for the belly or for lust. “Take away [fleshly] pleasures,” saith St. Bernard “and none will seek after riches.” Woe, woe ! for we see a horrible thing in the house of God. Whom but idolaters do we see ministering, whose god is in their belly ? For, in many monasteries, we may see ministers of the altar, whose duty it is to read a gospel or epistle or a lesson from the prophets, coming impudently to their ministry full filled with feasting and with wine, so that they do not so much sing as belch forth the sacred words ; not so much recite them, as vomit them. Moreover, it is plainer than noonday that such possessors of riches, even while they celebrate at the altar, keep their hearts far more truly among their treasure than upon the altar or in the divine mysteries. Is not covetousness indeed idolatry ? Would that these wretches would be wise, and would understand that those who treasure up money are at the same time treasuring up wrath to themselves !

CHAP. 14.—How St. Benedict hath forbidden to monks all costliness of clothing and apparel.

CHAP. 15.—Of the fear of God, and of the praise and comfort of humility, and how profitable it is to renounce all our possessions.

CHAP. 16.—How a monk should undertake to avoid cities and crowds of men.

1. *i.e.* small cells or granges dependent upon the parent house. Leigh Priory near Kingsbridge, is an extraordinarily well preserved grange of this kind. The author does not seem to refer here to the much rarer cases where a monk got leave to serve a parish.

2. The text has *cum*, but the sense requires *cur*.

CHAP. 17.—Concerning the origin of the names “monk” and “cenobite” and “anchorite”: also, concerning the proper aim and perfection of such men.

BOOK II.

CHAP. 1.—Of manual labour, and how profitable such labour is.

[This chapter deals with the commonplace truths so often repeated by monastic disciplinarians, as to the danger of idleness and its parentage of other sins. This is reinforced by a host of quotations: *e.g.* St. Jerome’s warning to Eustochium and her fellow-nuns “Hold fast to this, that idleness is mother of all concupiscence and uncleanness and sin.”]

CHAP. 2.—Concerning the interpretation of certain Gospel texts, whereupon slothful monks rely to prove that they are not bound to work with their hands.

Nevertheless, men who are sunk in such sloth as this, not willing to live by the labour of their own hands—although St. Paul wrought thus without ceasing—are wont to cite certain texts of the Scriptures, whereby they cloke their slothfulness. It is written (they say) “My meat is to do the will of my Father”; and again: “Labour for the meat which perisheth not.”¹ This last text, indeed, was cited by a certain monk who came to Abbot Sylvanus, while the other brethren were found at work: whereupon the Abbot bade him take a book and enter into an empty cell. When the time of refection was past, and this brother had not been called, at last he was driven by hunger to come forth from his cell; and, meeting with the Abbot, he asked whether the brethren had not eaten that day. “They have eaten,” said the other. “Wherefore, then, hast thou not called me?” “Thou” (said the abbot) “art a spiritual man, who hast no need of such food as this. We, who are carnal, need to eat, and therefore we labour.” At this the monk knew his own error, and sought to atone for it by falling at the feet of his abbot, who added, “Mary, therefore, hath need of Martha after all!” When therefore our Lord said “Labour for the food which perisheth not” this is not so understood as that He forbade to labour with our hands, but He forbade that, for the sake of this food that perisheth, we should fight against God. For many live that they may eat, and set their felicity in the pleasures of the palate, whose god is their belly . . .

Some again, as Saint Austin saith, use the Gospel words to feed and cherish not only their slothfulness but also their arrogance. Our Lord, (they plead), said “Be not solicitous therefore, saying, What shall we eat, or: What shall we drink, or: Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns.” But in these words Christ forbiddeth too great carefulness, which is wont to proceed from inordinate fear, and almost

1. John IV, 34, and VI, 27. It will be observed that neither is quoted with literal accuracy.

from a want of faith in God's goodness and providence ; He forbiddeth not labour, seeing that He saith, through His apostle [Paul], " If any man will not work, neither let him eat." . . . Thrice and four times miserable are we, who should be noted for our poverty, yet we strive with body and soul to avoid labours and cares, that we may build a way to perdition ; we who are all fire for earthly things, and all ice for heavenly things ! The things that will soonest have an end, are sought with unending diligence. How do the lovers of this world sweat after an empty inheritance ! At a less price than this, the Pearl of Christ might be bought.

CHAP. 3.—Wherein the monk should exercise himself, and what things he should shun.

[The monk should exercise himself in fervent prayer, reading at certain regular hours, and manual work as a relaxation for the mind.]

But, (with shame I speak it), how slothful are many of our Order ! It is plain that oftentimes, finding naught to do, or wishing to find naught, they spend their day in frivolous speech, which should be unknown to a Religious : for, as St. Bernard saith, " trifles in the mouths of worldly folk are mere trifles ; in the mouth of a priest or a monk they are blasphemy . . ." Thus far St. Bernard. Sometimes [these monks], sunk in sloth, visit the men and women of the neighbourhood and fall into talk with girls,¹ wherein they stick neither at words of shame nor biting speeches that besmirch the fair fame of others ; so that, not unfrequently, all shame is lost, and they go on brazenly to detestable wickedness. For their very eyes bring ravage into [*depredantur*] their soul, and the castle of their heart is utterly overthrown, so that neither the inner wall of continence is left standing, nor the outer wall of abstinence. For slothful ease is the prompter of all evil ; as the poet saith " Men ask what made Aegisthus an adulterer ; the cause is not far to seek ; he was idle ! "

CHAP. 4.—Of the foolish waste of time and the harm proceeding from evil sloth.

CHAP. 5.—Of silence ; how profitable it is, and how unprofitable is loquacity.

CHAP. 6.—Of the profit that comes from a sparing tongue or from silence ; the condemnation of laughter and the commendation of weeping.

[A few sentences of this chapter are worth quoting, in face of the recent statement by Cardinal Gasquet. " The monk, it must be remembered, was in no sense a gloomy person. . . . In fact,

1. Interdum, ocio torpentes, vicinos vicinasque adeunt, cum mulierculis colloquia miscent, in quibus nec turpibus parcitur verbis, etc.

the true Religious was told to try and possess *angelica hilaritas cum monastica simplicitas*” (*Eng. Monast. Life*, p. 146). This sentence, it may confidently be asserted, is as false in history as it is in Latin grammar. Dozens of quotations from distinguished monastic disciplinarians could be brought to support the position here stated by Jouenneaux.]

We have great reason to wonder, therefore, (especially when we have so many examples from our fathers, whom we profess to imitate even in their names), that we bubble over with so many vain and unprofitable words; seeing that St. Benedict alloweth not that a monk should open his mouth to utter that sort of speech. On that account, St. Hugh of Grenoble¹ was wont to say: ‘it is utter madness to waste, in laughter and in telling of trifles, that time which is due to weeping and which should rightly be spent in lamentation.’ For the same reason Abbot John,² seeing one of the brethren laughing at table, wept bitterly; and, to another laugher, the Old Man said: “are we to render an account, before heaven and earth, of our whole life, and yet dost thou laugh?” Even as we bear about with us the shadow of our bodies, even so should weeping and compunction bear us company wheresoever we may be. For the monk’s office is to mourn and bewail his own sins and those of the people, and in such mourning to await the Lord’s coming.

[And so on, through nearly a page more of quotations from different Fathers to the same effect.]

CHAP. 7.—A commendation of the cell, and of all things which should be done therein.

[After speaking of the evils of that state of lethargy or spiritual dulness which Dante calls *acedia*, and the Latin moralists of the Middle Ages *accidia*, the author continues:]

To this sickness of *accidia* many monks seek a remedy—many even of those who love the [strict] observance [of the Rule]—imagining that, if they first indulge in the pleasures of the fields and the open air, they will afterwards be readier and quicker to fulfil their monastic duties. But they are deceived; for in general a wandering body has its fellow in a wandering mind; and, in proportion as the body is spread abroad from place to place, so also the thoughts of the mind are multiplied.

CHAP. 8.—Concerning pernicious writings; also, how [even] the simple warnings of the Rule become a matter of guilt when they are contemned. Also, of the perfection of charity whereunto the Religious should tend.

But now we must gird up our loins to examine, as narrowly as possible, the writings of certain persons, wherein such men have striven to impede the reformation of all these irregularities. . . . These are the men who have taught their tongues to speak lies; men who are ingenious against

1. Died 1132, in the 52nd year of his episcopate: see Fleury, *Hist. Eccles.*, an. 1130 § IV; he was a friend of St. Bernard.

2. *Vitae Patrum* Lib. V, libellus tertius (Migne. *P.L.*, vol. 73, cols. 861c and 864a).

righteousness, learned in the cause of falsehood, wise to do evil, eloquent adversaries of the truth. . . . Others trespass on this same path, in their wish to please those who are tainted with the same disease as themselves,—those, in short, who are unwilling to lead the life that they have promised to lead, and who press incongruous texts into the service of their own devices, saying (among other things) that we must not transgress the traditions of our elders ; as if our elders were other than the lawgivers [of our Order], whose traditions we have accepted of our own free will. For the Rule of St. Benedict, while it is proposed to all men, is yet imposed upon no man : yet this is the Rule to which we submitted when we took our vows ; and now we are attempting to gainsay its commands, hunting after all possible subterfuges. This must prove, more clearly than daylight, that this sort of monks, with their empty verbiage, are only hunting for some sort of colourable reason which may excuse them to their purblind fellows for not fulfilling the vows which their own lips have freely taken. . . .

For they plead, that there are many “ simple warnings ” contained in the Rule, whereof the transgression may indeed be a *sin*, yet no *crime* ; or, (to phrase it in their own words) although such warnings are binding to the *venial* sin of such as transgress, yet not to *mortal* sin.¹ This we ourselves deny not, if the matter be considered only in itself. But if [to this mere venial sin] contempt be added, then every man of experience must confess that the guilt of such a contemptuous transgressor amounts to a crime. And how, I pray, can these men exculpate themselves from such sin of contempt, when they daily transgress these very statutes which they call “ simple,” and violate them without the least scruple, without any excuse of infirmity or ignorance or passion ?

CHAP. 9.—That the Religious state is an easy highway towards perfection ; moreover, that a man must not halt in God’s way, but rather go forward to higher things from day to day.

Is not the state of Religion rather a discipline and an exercise of reaching onwards to the very perfection of Charity ? A monastery’s place of work is not in a vast extent of fields, nor among sunny hillsides, nor in towns or cities, although many who profess Religion frequent such places more than their cells. They are more in the place of games than in their monastery, more in the market-place than in church, more in the busy streets than in the cloister ; their hands are more accustomed to hawks or falcons than to the book of the Gospels or to manual labour. Do these things need reformation, or not ? let him see whose eyes are opened, and not winking or purblind. But how great a part are these dregs [of the whole] ? They are so many and thick that they may scarce be cleared

1. Medieval disciplinarians divided the monastic Rule into two parts : (i) the *tria substantialia*, or *tria vota*, of poverty, obedience, and chastity ; and (ii) the *simplicia monita*, or minor points which were intended to safeguard the three Substantial Vows : e.g. the prohibition of flesh diet, the strict clausturation of Religious, the steady application to work, etc., etc. It was held that not even a pope could dispense from the three Substantials. Any infraction of the three Vows was, therefore, in itself a mortal sin ; infraction of a “ simple warning,” on the other hand, was in itself only a venial fault ; though of course here, as in every other case, aggravating circumstances might make it into a mortal sin.

away. . . . Must we not say that these men have fallen and gone astray from the right path, seeing that they not only presume to halt on the very threshold, but are not even ashamed to go far back from their former state? so that many who should have gone forward in Religion are become far worse than when they walked the easy ways of the world. Whence cometh this, but that, in entering Religion, their only task was to seek bodily indulgence, in process of time, in some fat benefice (as they call it)? Moreover, did not these men's parents pave a way for themselves, to fill up what was wanting in their own wealth from the patrimony of Christ, thinking more of themselves in devoting their sons to Religion, than of their children's salvation? Hence it is that no inquisition whatsoever is made into the manner of life that is fostered in such a monastery; for morals are their very last care; of morals is the latest question, or truly no question at all; nay, the man would be unwilling to suffer reformation and a regular life in his monastery,¹ since the very hope of money, which had enticed him in, would thus be lost. This is why those who have thus taken the vows can never be brought to a regular life, since they have never tasted such a life even with the outer edge of their lips. Of these we may say with Jerome, that some who, while they were yet in the world, could scarce fill their craving belly with millet and coarse bread, become so dainty and delicate when they are in Religion, that they disdain even delicate fare, enslaved now to a threefold greediness, and utterly forgetful of the poverty to which they were born. . . .

CHAP. IO.—Of the perfecting of the will; also, that this daily transgression of the simple warnings cannot but be accompanied by contempt.

[After quoting from Bernard, Augustine, Ovid and Boethius to show that man must either progress in virtue or actually recede, Jouenneaux continues:]

Upon you also, if ye will turn your eyes to the truth, there is laid a great necessity to live in honesty, since ye pass your lives under the eyes of the All-seeing Judge. They transgress daily and indiscriminately these points which they call "simple warnings," not only imposing no force upon their own appetites, but even (a thing execrable to all pious souls!) exulting therein. In order that their own damnation may appear the more plainly, they defend their fault, as the saying is, with tongues and hands and feet and claws, and delight in preaching their own sin after the fashion of the men of Sodom, who rejoice when they have done evil and exult in the most unrighteous actions. Who can say that such wilful transgression, and such daily transgression, does not bring with it the sin of contempt? Wherein is made true that saying of Augustine: "no sin is so venial, but that it becomes criminal when we take a pleasure therein."

CHAP. II.—That the keeping of these simple warnings is of the greatest use for fulfilling the Vows, whereunto these delicate monks will lend

1. There is some slight corruption here in the text, though the general sense is plain; it reads: "immo vero nollet inibi reformare regulariterque vivi." Probably we ought to read *reformate*.

no hand. They avoid all the more difficult points because they have no expectation of the reward; nor need we wonder at their neglect of the warnings, when they will not even keep their very Vows.

Now, if the end at which we aim be a matter of strict command, are not these means also, which are necessary to reach this aim, equally strictly enjoined upon us?—You will say: “I admit that; but it is evident that these simple warnings are by no means necessary for our object”—Be it so, then. But do you not confess that the Three Vows are bound upon you by strict command? That, at least, you cannot deny. I ask, then; why are your papers and your parchments cumbered with these simple warnings which (as you suppose) no monk need touch even with the tips of his fingers?—You ask, how do I know this?—I answer: Because I see undisciplined monks who are become so delicate in a place of darkness and wilderness and solitude, that they will not even put the tips of their fingers to these things. For, in my opinion, these “warnings” are the prohibition of eating flesh except in case of necessity, the rules of regular fasts, of keeping silence, of using no soft beds and wearing no linen shirts, and other observances of the same kind. These, you will admit, were not added to no purpose, but are of great use, methinks, in safeguarding the three Vows. Wherefore, then, dost thou not use them as helps of the greatest utility towards the work that thou hast to do? Why then dost thou not rather command than discourage their observance? I suspect that these things seem great and hard to thee. Wherefore? because thou considerest not the great reward. . . . Indeed, we need not greatly marvel, if the simple warnings are despised by these men who think scorn of that desirable land, seeing that they pass dryshod, and glide swiftly past even those commands which are fixed by their solemn vows. For, among such, no goods are held in common, because there is no charity among them—charity, which seeketh not her own, and knoweth no affections of her own.

[He goes on to show that even heathens saw in worldly possessions a hindrance to philosophy.]

We, therefore, are called cenobites, “livers in common,” in name alone; for in no man doth the reality answer to the empty word. Many, indeed, neither know, nor have ever tasted, what the Common Life is; but, like worldly folk, each of them hath ever his own purse which he beareth with him; their mouths gaping for gain proclaim openly their greed for private property. The words of possession are ever in their mouth: *mine*, (they say), *thine*, and *his*, as though they were true possessors of these things; yet indeed they have not even the legal usufruct thereof. If any monk had used those words in the days of our Fathers in Egypt, (even though it were merely tripping and unawares, which is held to vindicate the act itself from guilt), he would not have gone unpunished; rather, he would have been made too cautious in future to fall back into such words, utterly unworthy of a Religious. Wherefore we cannot sufficiently marvel how these men can persuade themselves that, in acting thus, they are yet walking a path of safety. But their own iniquity hath blinded them; and they are so deeply sunk in

the slough of covetousness that they cannot see the very sunlight, nor consider how grievous is their peril.

CHAP. 12.—That they cannot keep the vow of obedience, seeing that they offend in so many warnings, even though these be simple in themselves.

But let us return to our first subject. Seeing that the monk, in the course of his Profession, hath promised to amend his manners in accordance with the Rule of St. Benedict; seeing, again, that our blessed Father enjoineth that all should follow the Rule as their guide, and that no man should lightly depart therefrom, how can these men possibly fulfil their vow of obedience while, (for example), they fear not to transgress the Rule in so many things, which are called in their language simple warnings?—Nay, (say they), we deny not that it is a fault to turn aside rashly from the guidance of the Rule; but we plead that it is a venial fault.—To this, then, I would ask them: Is it lawful for any Christian whatsoever (I say not, for a monk) to cast himself wilfully and knowingly into so many transgressions? Is it right never to recall his mind and his will from these faults? Nay, worse still, to patch up incongruous texts whereby he may prove to dull wits either that these frequent transgressions are no sin at all, or at least that they are scarcely sinful? . . . When therefore (for example) a monk is not ashamed to eat flesh promiscuously,¹ though he must know that St. Benedict, whose yoke he hath taken up of his own free will, hath forbidden such flesh-eating—when, again, he maketh no resolve to restrain his teeth from such food—when, moreover, no necessity presseth upon him, nor do we see him enticed by any sudden gust of concupiscence—who then can be so senseless and so depraved in mind as to believe that such a man is keeping the safe way? Who can doubt that such neglect of the commands of the Rule implieth contempt? . . . Perchance some monks could find some small palliation for their fault, when they beheld no other course of living in the whole region [where they dwelt]. But, now that the light hath appeared, what sort of excuse can they weave for themselves? for they may now see most clearly that the life is different in many monasteries, where the monks live according to the dictates of the Rule, and after the guidance of the law given by St. Benedict and freely accepted by his monks. But [these others], (as we have said above) plead that they would have never submitted their necks to such a yoke as this, if they had believed it to be so heavy. . . .

Our weaker Brother saith therefore: "I have fasted to-day; wherefore my head acheth already." Thou sayest false; rather, thou achest

1. *passim*, a very frequent word in visitatorial reports: e.g. "*passim comedunt carnes sine necessitate.*" Even popes, after attempting to stop it, were finally compelled to permit a great deal of flesh-eating *outside* the Refectory; and, where the popes granted an inch, the monks sometimes took an ell: (see chapters 14 and 15 here below). If the anonymous *Rites of Durham* is to be trusted, the refectory of that monastery was almost altogether abandoned by the last generation of monks. This book, however, has been far too uncritically followed by modern historians; it is pretty evident that the writer has more than once been betrayed by his own memory or by some untrustworthy informant; and it may be that the monks of Durham were not so entirely neglectful of Benedict XII's command that at least half the convent should eat daily in Refectory, and content themselves with the fare presented by St. Benedict's Rule.

because thou hast fasted but this one day : not so much for this one fast, as because thou hast not been wont to fast. Let custom come to thine aid, and thou shalt soon find this light and easy, which now appeareth hard and almost impossible on account of its rarity and unwontedness.—But thou art racked with hunger and desire of food?—Yea, forsooth, for thou art sunk in sloth ; the slothful mind can think of naught but food. I myself have learned by experience in Religion that, whensoever my mind is relaxed from prayer or labour, then my mind beginneth forthwith to ponder upon the next meal ; What meats shall we then receive ? or, How long must we yet wait until it be served ? But when I have recalled my mind to offer up a few prayers to God, or to do some work or other, then I forthwith forget my food, and mourn that the time should be so short. Let us grant, nevertheless, that thy pain is indeed due to thy fasting. Is it not right and just that this head should sometimes ache in God's service, which hath so often laboured even unto aching in the vanity of this world ? Should not thy belly even cry out sometimes with hunger, which hath often been filled at other times even unto vomiting ? Pain of stomach (saith St. Jerome) is far better than pain of mind ; far better to command thy body than to serve it ; far better that thy feet should totter, than thy chastity. Furthermore, how knowest thou whether this be indeed come to thee from fasting ? Yesterday, it may be, thou didst eat or drink so immoderately of some thing, that now by its very nature it doth burden thy head. We must not, therefore, ascribe such things either to the difficulty of the precepts laid upon us, or to the impossibility of our strength to bear them. Let us rather make first a true trial of our own selves, not flattering our own weakness, but rather considering with all diligence and exactitude what we can indeed perform.

CHAP. 13.—That flesh should not be eaten ; again, that we should seek moderation in wine and in sleep.

And, seeing that men of our profession burn with so consuming an itching to eat flesh, as if this were the human weakness of striving after all forbidden things and desiring all that hath been denied unto them, prithee let us see what St. Jerome thought concerning flesh-eating. " To eat flesh " (saith Jerome) " and to drink wine, and to fill the belly to repletion, is to sow the seeds of lust : wherefore Ezekiel writeth ' This was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom ; pride, fulness of bread and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.' "

[Here follow two pages of similar, and even plainer, warnings against flesh and wine for monks, until at last he anticipates an impatient retort :]

But thou wilt say " To what purpose then were swine created ? " To this we shall answer forthwith, like the give and take of boys at play, " Why then were vipers made, or scorpions ? " for thou must not judge that God hath made things in vain, because there are a multitude of birds and beasts which thy palate rejecteth. But, lest this answer seem

to thee contentious, and to partake rather of quarrel than of truth, hear [another reason]. Swine and boars and other beasts were created for soldiers and wrestlers, shipmen and miners, and others devoted to violent labours, that such men might have food to sustain the vigour which their bodies need. But what is this to us, whose conversation should be in heaven? What is this to us, whose duty is to quench the ardour of our pleasures by a greater love of Christ, and to tame the beast of wantonness, that it may seek not after lust but after food, and still lack that which it seeketh, and may bear its rider, the Holy Spirit, with a moderate and measured gait. . . .

CHAP. 14.—A confutation of our adversaries in this matter of flesh-eating.

But a certain man hath written in favour of flesh-eating, whose name I spare for the sake of the bond of friendship. He, in his vehement desire to maintain the right of monks to regale themselves with flesh food, even against the condemnation of such flesh by their Rule and the Papal prohibition of the practice, hath written that Abraham and other men of the Old Testament, conspicuous for their holy lives, were flesh-eaters. To this plea I am wont to answer briefly enough; that this is indeed true, but these were no monks of St. Benedict, nor were they bound by any vows which would compel them to labour to lead their lives according to the word and guidance of any Rule but that of God. Not thus is it with you, who are so bound by this triple cord that ye cannot by any means loose or unbind yourselves; for the cord is threefold, nor can it easily be broken. It is indeed marvellous how we can delight in catching at such subterfuges, as though we considered not that the Most Highest, Who trieth the heart and reins, looketh down upon our vanities and laugheth them to scorn. He that formed the eye, shall he not see? Moreover, this same man hath excogitated another comment, with the help of his friends who are consumed with this itching to eat flesh, and he casteth it like dust into the eyes of the ignorant. A certain Pope, they say, named Benedict [XII], hath given the monks a dispensation to eat flesh. Yet this Pope, in the same chapter wherein he maketh mention of flesh-eating, doth command that monks should maintain inviolate that which hath been written of flesh-eating by our father St. Benedict, and by his own predecessor, Pope Innocent III.¹ But, say they, he himself [*i.e.* Benedict XII], in that he forbiddeth to monks the eating of flesh on Tuesdays and Saturdays, would seem to have granted the rest: as though an abbot, forbidding his monks to go to the town, should thereby be understood to have granted them leave to go out into the fields or into any other place whatsoever! . . . What then, think you was the cause which impelled the Pope to command that monks should not devour flesh on Saturdays?—especially since no Christian, in France at any rate, ventures to do so, in the common course of church customs, with the exception of a few Saturdays whereon

1. He might also have added, Gregory IX, in his famous *Statuta* of 1235.

some say that they eat it in accordance with private custom, in rejoicing for our Lord's birth; but so small an exception as this is of no account. What, I say, impelled the Pope to issue this statute, but that the monastic order had become so corrupt as to eat the fat of animals, and perhaps pounded flesh also,¹ even on days when church custom forbade it? So that, (as I have heard), this hath come to pass so often at a certain great monastery, that the poor folk coming to their wonted repast, and scenting the odour of flesh, or at least of fat, fled away in horror, choosing rather to suffer hunger than to violate the common rite of the Church.² Whether this be true indeed, I know not; for I have it only on hearsay. But I am compelled to believe it by a certain Council celebrated at Aix-la-Chapelle—no General Council, but a Synod of prelates—in which Synod certain assembled abbots, whose names I know not, decreed in I know not what ill-considered spirit, (for we must hope that the decree had not been considered), that monks should use [for cooking on fast days] an oil made from bacon. O noble statute, to be celebrated for many centuries! After all, no decree can make bacon into anything but bacon; out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and their tongue hath betrayed their true manner of life. Would that they had been sleeping in their beds when they uttered such words, and when, by these vain decrees of theirs, they were not ashamed to brand their glorious Order with the mark of infamy. Moreover, I am induced to believe this hearsay tale by the prohibition of the aforesaid Pope [Benedict XII], which doth not so much tend to clear the monks as to brand them with ignominy; since they have not scrupled to depart so far from the life of our first fathers, that they blush not to assume a licence which is not permitted even to the laity. When monks unhesitatingly transgress upon the ground which layfolk avoid through reverence for the Church, they thereby heap up a grievous reproach upon the whole Order; in so much that the very name of monk, exalted once to the very stars in glorious praise, is now become a laughing stock and an abomination [*risui pateat et horrori*]; and the very thing which was once wont to gild the Religious with honour, is now condemned, through the sins of many, to sound in men's ears as inglorious and dishonourable.

CHAP. 15.—That monks may not eat flesh even in the infirmary.

They imagine another subterfuge also, deceiving themselves with lies; for they claim that the aforesaid [Pope] Benedict permitteth them, however sound and fat they may be, to repair to the Infirmary and there feast on the flesh forbidden by St. Benedict and by Popes—yea, and by Benedict [XII] himself, whom they quote in their own favour! For he commanded that they should keep whatsoever St. Benedict and Innocent III had prescribed concerning flesh-eating; nor was this a loose or half-hearted command, but, (to cite his very words) "We do firmly and unshakably decree."

1. *Tusis carnis*, the mortrewse of Chaucer's cook.

2. Peter the Venerable says very plainly of his own Cluniac monks, that he found them accustomed to break the Advent fast by eating fat with their food when it was forbidden to layfolk. (*Migne. Pat. Lat.* vol. 189, col. 1028.)

Moreover, if flesh-eating be permitted to monks, wherefore do they go into the infirmary? Do they truly believe that this place halloweth a deed against which the very stones of their monasteries cry out as unlawful elsewhere? Wherefore do they usurp and invade that place which (as its very name clearly betokeneth) is destined for the sick alone?

[After arguing, not very conclusively, that the context of Benedict XII's statute forbids any such subterfuge, and after quoting from St. Bernard, who had denounced the earlier stages of this abusive practice nearly four centuries before, Jouenneaux proceeds:]

This mercy [*misericordia*] is most cruel, serving the body that it may slay the soul.¹ Such men, slaves (if I may so say) to their own sensuality, if only they can find some loose or mouldy phrase in some author, seize it at once and cling obstinately thereunto, neglecting all the rest which beareth a more active meaning, ill-suited to their own remiss manners. Moreover, why do they not seek out some infirmary on all occasions whensoever they eat meat? for we know well that, wheresoever they may be, they abstain not from flesh-eating; and (which is a grave source of scandal) whithersoever they go outside the monastery, they are not ashamed to eat flesh, as if they were layfolk, publicly and indiscriminately and in the presence of all men, whether in cities and in wine-taverns or in country villages. Sometimes they eat in the houses of their gossips, although the law forbiddeth them all such relationships,² or again among citizens, at whose feasts they are as frequent guests, or more frequent, than even worldly-minded folk; at other times they eat in closets and in private chambers. Wherefore then do they presume to cite this Pope [Benedict XII], whose commands they set at naught? For he not only forbiddeth flesh to all who go forth from the monastery, but even, according to their own interpretation, will suffer no layfolk to be invited³ to, or be present at, such banquetings in the Infirmary. Let them therefore shut their mouths, and rather humbly acknowledge their fault than wantonly defend it. For even where, by tacit admission, we seem to allow them these interpretations of theirs (though indeed we admit them not), yet we convict them of not observing even their own interpretations, whereby they claim this licence which emboldeneth them to eat flesh so promiscuously. For, from Pope [Benedict XII] himself, (whom they use as a shield or buckler to shelter themselves withal) they cannot prove, by any shift or stretch of interpretation, that

1. *Misericordia* was a consecrated term in the later centuries of monasticism, to betoken a hall built between the Refectory and the Infirmary, in which monks might eat flesh on alternate days without breaking their Rule in either of the other two buildings. Benedict XII, as we have seen, was obliged at last to legalize this practice, only insisting that at least half the convent should always eat in Refectory.

2. It was forbidden for monks to become godfathers, not only because this involved them in a fresh spiritual relationship incompatible with their ideal, but also because it entangled them with worldly folk and worldly affairs. The temptation, however, was very great; cf. the letter of an abbot at Bordeaux in Father Denifle's *Désolation des Eglises, etc.*, vol. I, p. 583 (A.D. 1419). The abbey had been so impoverished by war that the Abbot begged for a papal indulgent permitting him to stand godfather to forty children of noble or wealthy families; the pope granted only four. The infraction of this rule is commonly noted by medieval visitors.

3. The text has *imitari*, but the sense obviously requires *imitari*.

these things are permitted, howsoever they may stretch their parchments and look to vanities or to mad falsehoods.

CHAP. 16.—Of the eating of the Paschal Lamb ; of silence and reading at time of Refection ; and of that Bread of Souls which, in our days, is held of no account.

Our flesh-eating monks add this plea also ; that our Saviour ate the flesh of the Paschal Lamb. Let them find, if they can, that he ate any other flesh ; yet this itself is nothing to our purpose ; for these monks themselves might lawfully eat it, if they had not bound themselves, of their own free will, by a vow to the contrary. . . . We ourselves daily eat the flesh and drink the blood of that true Lamb whereof that eating was but the type. . . . Not from such flesh doth St. Benedict withhold thee ; but, by prohibiting [other] flesh, he would dispose thee to this eating [of the true Lamb], so far as in him lieth. . . .

Yet,—whereas Pope Benedict [XII] himself, whom ye have so often in your mouths, if not in your hands, doth expressly command that monks should always keep silence at their meals, listening with attentive ears to the reading, which (as he biddeth) should never be wanting,—see now how ye obey this mandate, who not only care to read nothing when ye go abroad, but even within your own walls ye defraud the law, rather affording a mere sip or foretaste of reading, at the beginning of the meal, than truly reading [through the repast]. For, scarcely has the briefest sound of reading reached your ears, when ye hear also “ here endeth the Lesson ! ” and the reading is past, and busy talk settles down upon the company. Meanwhile quarrels arise, with backbiting and buffoonery and laughter and discussions, not concerning books but concerning meats. The argument is not of divine things, but of the sweetest and mellowest wine ; and at length, when the mealtime hath been spent in vanities, some monk, mellow with liquor,¹ mounteth into the pulpit, not indeed to read but to gulp forth a word or two with his sweetened breath ; or, if thou wilt, to pour out wine to the company. When this man hath gulped out his strong wine for a brief space, then they arise from table, despatch the hymn as quickly as may be, and disperse each to his own fancy. Some cast off their frocks forthwith and gird themselves to a game of tennis ; those who have plenty of money, are not always ashamed to lend themselves to games that the law forbids ; and some will oftentimes gamble the whole night through. Others visit their neighbours, men and women, or hasten to tread the streets of the city, pretending that they are about the business of their offices. Alas ! in those early days when our Order first began, who would have believed that monks would fall to such a depth of sluggardy ! O, how far are we from the monks of St. Anthony’s time ! They, when for a while they visited each other for charity’s sake, were so greedy to receive the Bread of Souls one from the other, that they utterly forgot the food of the body, and oftentimes spent whole days with fasting bellies but full souls. This was the right order, wherein the worthier

1. Aliquis bene potus.

part was first served ; this was the highest discretion, when the greater received the ampler portion. But, when we meet together, it is no longer to eat the Lord's supper ; nor is there one to ask for the bread of heaven, or any to give it. Not a word of the Holy Scriptures ; not a word of our soul's salvation ; but jests and laughter and words that are spoken in the air ! At dinner, our maw is no less fed with feasting than our ears with gossiping, wherewith thou art so wholly taken up, as to know no moderation in eating. Meanwhile one course follows upon another ; and, in this desert of Religion, more men suffer from surfeit than from hunger. Nearly all these things were noted by St. Bernard. . . .

Peroration to the Second Book, wherein we repeat somewhat of that booklet [of our adversary] whereunto we have laboured to answer in our first two Books.

Enough hath now been said of that booklet which seems to have been lately written against our reform, and which hath never come wholly into our hands, but we only ran through a few sheets of it, some time since, not without indignation, since we saw the treacherous overthrow of the monastic order preached therein by men who eat of monastic bread. Yet these evils which we have here exposed in our Profession are no trumped-up charges, but seem to be committed everywhere in our Order. God forbid, however, that we should judge these things to be *in* order ; for no order admitteth of aught that is disorderly. Let me therefore be judged to dispute now not against our Order, but on its behalf, seeing that I reprehend not the Order in these men, but I rebuke these men's vices in the Order. But, if there be any who are displeased at these words, they themselves betray themselves, for they love not the Order if they will not condemn its corruption and its faults. Wherefore I make answer to all such men in those words of St. Gregory : *Melius est quod scandalum oriatur, quam veritas relinquatur*. For this monition of ours is no detraction, but rather a loving attraction to the amending of faults.

BOOK III.

CHAP. I.—Concerning the futile appeal of certain monks, with the confutation of certain objections. A strenuous plea against a certain appeal at law, made by the deformed monks, and printed at their expense.

[Jouenneaux challenges these appellants, (who apparently kept their anonymity) to the evangelical test, "by their fruits ye shall know them" ; but he unfortunately does not give the actual title of their treatise.]

CHAP. 2.—Concerning their foolish objection of certain privileges [which they claim].

[The appellants, in their booklet, had evidently claimed that they enjoyed from the Pope certain privileges of exemption, so that none but a *legatus a latere* could legally deal with them. Jouenneaux,

in answer to this, alleges a text in Canon Law which provides that, when monks "live in worldly fashion, and corrupt others by their example," the Ordinary may step in and correct them, without appeal to the Pope. He contends that the exemption upon which they rely must be fictitious, since it is inconceivable that a Pope should "give vice a loose rein, and grant men, by his indulgences, an occasion of offending God's goodness and of deserting the discipline of their Rule."]

CHAP. 3.—Confutation of their plea that they have kept their Rule in the past ; together with the contradiction of certain objections.

CHAP. 4.—Confutation of a certain foolish speech ; also, that it is not right for a monk to be experienced in worldly ways.

CHAP. 5.—The detractor's assertions turned against himself ; proof that divine service is not diminished [by us], but rather that it is restored from its ruin. Further, concerning the follies that are done in saying divine service, and concerning the sacrilegious partition of Christ's patrimony.

. . . Thou pleadest noisily, moreover, and croakest foolishly that divine service is diminished, and that the monastic constitutions and laudable customs are being changed. Here, as ever, thou art astray ; for divine service is rather increased ; nay, to speak more truly, that which hath been ruined is restored. Thinkest thou that God is truly worshipped where a man lifteth up his voice without his mind ? . . . where there is no reverence for sacred things ? where there is no silence —nay, rather contentions and quarrels. For indeed I know a monastery wherein the Brethren, grown old in evil days, were so torn with mutual quarrels that, when they sang any versicle together in choir, they would cast sacks full of insults at each other, hurling threats of worldly loss backward and forward [as they sang] ; and this, for the sake of Christ's tunic, which (more iniquitous than the soldiers who crucified our Lord) they tore between them,¹ as indeed we may see the Brethren do publicly in almost all monasteries. For each monk claimeth his own part of Christ's patrimony ; one is Almoner, and giveth no alms, but filleth his purse with the money of the poor ; another is Cellarer, and should rightly be father of the monastery, next to the Abbot, caring for the food and clothing of the Brethren ; yet indeed his chief care is for himself. He feedeth himself, laying up money and stores for many years, and dealing meanwhile like a niggard in those things which custom biddeth him minister to the rest. Another is Hostillar, yet without hospitality ; for that word is almost dead in our monasteries ; since, among these deformed monks, none cares any longer to keep up hospitality. I have heard how, in one most famous monastery, there is a guesten-house, but foul with dirt and squalor, with one, or at most two beds, and those almost always

1. *i.e.* they quarrelled over their shares in the monastic endowments, the "patrimony of Christ."

neglected and rarely spread [for guests]. Yet doth St. Benedict so commend hospitality to us, that he biddeth the Abbot to eat ever with the guests—not with his neighbour and acquaintance, or with the townsfolk, or with ladies and great men of this world; for in our Rule I find no mention of ladies, howsoever honourable they be, nor of intimate friends. Therefore saith St. Jerome; “let women seldom or never cross the threshold of thy gúesten-house; for that man cannot live with all his heart in God’s presence who is open to the conversation of women. [After a quarter of a page of similar quotations, Jouenneaux proceeds:] Another monk is called Infirmarer, in name but not in deed, in mere sound but without true effect, for in nowise doth he affect the sick Brethren. For if, in one of these deformed monasteries, a monk be moneyless and sick, then his parents must be told of his sickness, that they may send to him if they will.¹ For each striveth for himself alone, and it is seldom indeed that he careth for another; and he who hath money layeth it by and storeth it up for himself, never to be brought forth until the monk shall have given up the ghost, and the Abbot shall bid men turn his whole cell upside-down and search every corner of his furniture. Another monk is called steward—or, in their own language, Sacrist—though indeed he is far more careful of pelf than of sacred things. He is lynx-eyed for offerings and for droppings of wax tapers, oftentimes complaining that the service is too long drawn out, and that the tapers are thereby too prodigally consumed. Yet he would seem indeed to have no just matter of complaint against long-drawn services, since all hasten forth [from the church] with what speed they may, so that oftentimes it sufficeth some of them to gabble the beginning and the end of their verse; what better speed than this couldst thou require, Brother Sacrist? Moreover, they are so hasty that their lips have no time to pause in the midst of the verse, nor do they keep the *dipsalma*, or interval of silence between verse and verse: in truth, they could invent no more voluble fashion of chanting, unless thou wouldst have them think the psalms, or beckon them with their fingers, instead of pronouncing the words! Thinkest thou now that these monks with their Abbot are walking in a safe way, when they have thus divided Christ’s patrimony among themselves? It is for others to judge after their own conscience; but God forbid that I should walk in that way! Moreover, in some monasteries, words of contumely fall thick amidst the psalmody, and are bandied hither and thither from mouth to mouth. At matins and at other hours, the psalms must needs give place to these revilings, so that the choir of psalm-singers might rather be taken for a tavern full of drunken folk than for a choir of chanting brethren. The monks, still burdened with the flesh which they devoured at supper, and drenched with drink, sigh not with devotion but from the gorge²; and many, who know neither to temper

1. The complaint that the sick are neglected appears with startling frequency in visitatorial records. In the earliest existing (Odo Rigaldi, 1248–1269), it occurs almost as frequently as in later visitations; and it is dealt with in Pope Gregory IX’s Statutes of 1235.

2. *Usque adeo ut chorus psallentium judicari possit ebriorum taberna potius quam psallendi officina; pridianisque carnibus crudi adhuc monachi et ingurgitati pro suspiriis ructamina fundunt.* Compare Chaucer, *Summoner’s Tale*, l. 225.

“Whan they for soules say the Psalm of Davit,
Lo, ‘huf,’ they seye, ‘cor meum eructavit.’”

their wine nor to use it with moderation, smell so strong of liquor that, if they had to give the kiss of peace, they would seem to be offering less a kiss than a draught of wine.

CHAP. 6.—Of the extraordinary banquetings of monks, and of their more shameful belly-worship.

Moreover, this multitude of servants, which St. Benedict never instituted, hath bred a certain worldly custom in some monasteries, that the monks, after Prime, betake themselves forthwith to the kitchen or to some other corner of the monastery, excepting always those who are under necessity of celebrating Mass—*necessity*, I say, for there are few in a monastery of this kind who are wont to celebrate for devotion's sake, unless this fatal money be added also¹—and there, (that I may express the barbarous deed in barbarous words) they devour their "Prime-morsel," (*offam prime*), under which appellation and circumlocutory phrase is comprised hot broth with bacon or mutton floating therein. There, then, as we may well suspect, monks may be seen standing and devouring rather than eating; not so much dividing the morsels with their teeth, as swallowing them almost whole; this they do so hastily, because they are compelled to hasten straight back—I can scarce say, to the rest of their *psalmody*, but rather to the rest of the chase. Wherefore, within a brief space (so far as we may gather from conjecture) the monks may be seen, recalled by the sound of a bell, and (you will scarce restrain your laughter) either leaving their half-eaten morsels or licking their beards that drip with greasy bacon; and thus, with well-lined bellies, they return to gulp out the praises of God in most undevout haste. Whence, I ask, cometh this incubus of breakfasts and noonday meals? though this generation of monks who seek not the Lord call them "afternoon-bites"—[*pomeridianas gustationes*]. Do they spring from the Rule, or from the decrees or manners of our fathers, or from some error of heathendom?

[After quoting instances from heathen philosophers to put his fellow-monks to shame, he continues:]

Beyond all doubt these things should move us rather to mourning than to laughter? when fasts are seen to be broken promiscuously, when gluttony burns to forestall the canonical hours, when natural concupiscence is more and more inflamed by the heat of flesh-foods and wine, and God's praise is not pronounced but belched forth; in brief, God is not worshipped, but provoked to wrath by this grievous irreverence. . . .

CHAP. 7.—Of the fear of divine vengeance, with examples. Also, that monks are bound to no other church services but those of their Rule. Further, how prolixity in prayers should be avoided.

1. Here, again, official documents of the later Middle Ages show a steadily increasing custom of paying individual monks for singing particular masses. It was probably worse in France; but certainly it was common in England.

[The author predicts the certainty of divine vengeance upon these prevarications of the Rule, and insists on the folly of adding ceremonies beyond those prescribed in the Rule, so long as these services themselves are so hastily and undevotedly performed.]

CHAP. 8.—Of the interpretation of that Gospel word “when ye pray, use not vain repetitions.”

[Many quotations from the Fathers to show the distinction between praying *much* and making *long prayers*. This latter (argues Jouenneaux) degenerates into an unintelligent gabble.]

It is clearly evident that unreformed monks will spend less time and labour in running through ten psalms, than reformed monks over a single psalm. Moreover, in many monasteries, and especially at the night-services, there is but one priest present, with a young boy; moreover, I have heard that one single priest has sometimes performed the night-services and taken the part of both sides of the choir, while the others, it may be guessed, are buried in wine and sleep.¹ How then art thou bold enough to boast of the long services sung by deformed monks, when they are so oftentimes interrupted by quarrels or jests, by buffooneries or vain speech? It is nobly done if the divine services be said as the Rule commandeth, both carefully and devoutly.

CHAP. 9.—Of the [true] manner of singing and of avoiding a multitude of psalms before the night-hours. Also, concerning the memory of our Lord's passion.

CHAP. 10.—Of the change in our constitutions; also, of the abridgement of that prolixity in divine service wherefrom proceedeth in part this deformation of the monastic Order.

[The Author points out how the monks had gradually overlaid the comparatively simple services prescribed by St. Benedict with a mass of superfluous ceremonies which, (as St. Augustine had already complained under similar provocation) made even the Mosaic ceremonies tolerable in comparison: he then complains (as St. Bonaventura had complained 250 years before) that these ceremonies cloaked a growing laxity of life.]

Indeed, it is from such superfluities that the decay of the monastic Order hath principally come about. For, if they gabble rather than pronounce a great mass of services, then they flatter themselves that all is safe, letting fasts and handiwork go. They break the rule of silence, of poverty, and of obedience; nay, they oftentimes neglect and banish altogether both chastity and the rest of the regular observances. Would

1. At Peterborough, in 1437, there were nominally 38 monks, not counting the cell of Oxney; yet the Prior reported to the Bishop that, on ordinary days, only 10 or 12 of these came to choir; the rest were absent on various excuses, good, bad and indifferent, “so that the secular folk, who see this, murmur at this scanty attendance in choir.” I owe this quotation to the kindness of Mr. A. Hamilton Thompson, who is preparing this volume of Bp. Alnwick's visitations for the Lincoln Record Society.

that they would sing those services which the Rule prescribeth, without additions of later invention, and would do their best to keep the other observances of the Rule ; for thus would they nobly deal with their Order and with the founders of their monasteries, seeing that the pious singing of a single psalm would benefit their souls more than such a chattering of the whole psalter. For such irreverence as this doth rather provoke the Most Highest to wrath than it can appease Him ; and, when a displeasing person is sent as intercessor, then the mind of the person to be appeased is rather provoked to greater wrath.

CHAP. II.—That monks should avoid their native home and the neighbourhood of their kindred, which is most harmful.

CHAP. 12.—Confutation of those men who assert that the Reformed Brethren have taken refuge in [other men's] monasteries from sheer necessity.

[The author makes short work of this calumny ; he points out that the Reformed have been introduced into the Unreformed houses, not in order to share the wealth of the older monks, but to teach them how to live without private property.]

Conclusion. Of the ineptitude of a certain letter added to the aforesaid Appeal ; and peroration of this whole work.

[The Appellants, it appears, had compared the present monastic reformers to Mahomet. After dealing with this, Jouenneaux concludes :]

We have named no man by name . . . our disputation hath been in general terms, against the vices of men who are monks not in truth, but in name, not in effect, but in dress. Whosoever therefore takes what we have said as contumely to himself, he shall judge his own conscience, and condemn himself worse than me.

III.

Visitations of three Great Houses in Norwich Diocese, A.D. 1514.

RICHARD NIX or Nicke was Bishop of Norwich from 1500 to 1536. The Register of his Visitations begins only in 1514, and shows that he visited only every six years, instead of the legal requirement of triennial visits. From surviving records in different countries, there can be little doubt that this duty of visitation was irregularly performed by all but the most conscientious bishops. It is plain, however, that this of 1514 was not Nicke's first visitation, for the Walsingham record refers to an earlier one. He had under his authority two great houses standing definitely above the rest—the Cathedral priory of Norwich, and the famous pilgrimage-priory of Walsingham. Next to these, came the abbeys of St. Benet and Wymondham: none of the other houses can be put in the first rank. The Wymondham visitation of 1514 is summarized in my first *Study*, p. 4; a summary of the other three will, in this place, throw very definite light on the foregoing assertions of Jouenneaux. In the Norwich case, after hearing the detailed evidence of the monks, (which, however illuminating, is too long for insertion here), the Bishop himself thus pronounces judgment:

A. COMPERTA AT THE CATHEDRAL MONASTERY [AT NORWICH].

1. The charters of the dependent cells are not kept within the monastery precincts.
2. The monks do not study after they have taken their Orders of Priesthood.
3. The monks' friends have access to their chambers, and not to the room set aside for that purpose, (viz. the parlour within the infirmary).
4. Dom William Harridaunce is the Prior's chaplain, subcellarer and keeper of the beer cellar, and he unduly exerciseth the office of cellarer.
5. The Prior of St. Leonard's [a dependent cell] permitteth all that appertaineth to his office to go to ruin, and maketh no repairs.
6. The chamberlains do not pay the monks their fees [*i.e.* their pocket-money], to the amount of 8s. [each].
7. The Prior of St. Leonard's is hortolan or gardener, and performeth not this office.
8. The monks have no preceptor to instruct them in grammar, but have only two lessons a week from Master Wheteacre.
9. Dom John Sall, Precentor, doth not pay the Brethren their pensions.
10. The dormitory bell is broken.

11. Dom William Winkfeld swaggereth like a stage-player [*histrionis modo jactitat*] and revileth his Brethren.

12. The lost silver vessels are never recalled when the inventories are examined.

13. Women of bad character [*suspectae*] have access to the monastery.¹

14. The wife of Robert, the Subprior's servant, is suspected with the Subprior.²

15. Certain of the Brethren wear linen shirts and long close hosen, and especially Dom John Sall.³

16. Religion and chastity are not kept, through the fault of the Subprior, who giveth an evil example.

17. The number of monks is not complete.

18. The third Prior punisheth faults not with fairness, but partially.

19. Dom Francis Norwich is disobedient, and a mover of quarrels among the Brethren.

20. Many of the younger Brethren are sent to the dependent cells before they are instructed in religion and in letters.⁴

21. Suspicious women have access to the house of the guest-master.⁵

22. Dom Stephen Dersham keepeth not the schools [*i.e.* does not follow his studies at the University], nor doth he wear the habit according to the ancient custom; Dom Thomas Lemon likewise weareth not the customary dress.

23. Divine services, both by night and day, are not duly observed, by the fault of the Subprior and third Prior.

24. The chantry of Bishop Walter is not duly served.⁶

25. The monks wear frocks of worsted, contrary to rules.⁷

1. This item is so important that it will be well to give the exact words of the witnesses upon which the Bishop's judgment is based. "Dom John Lakenham, Prior of the Cell of Aldby, saith . . . that when he cometh to the monastery [of Norwich], it wearieth him to see the suspicious access of young women to the cloister, guessten-house, and infirmary. . . . Dom Nicholas Bedingham, Infirmerer, saith . . . that suspicious women have frequent access to the guest-master's chamber. . . . Dom John Shilton, third Prior . . . saith that women have suspicious access to the infirmary within the monastery."

2. Here again the detailed evidence runs: "Dom John Sall saith . . . that the Subprior, Bedingham, and Ralph Syblys are suspected with the wives of the Subprior's servants, of William Bevy in the parish of St. Peter Mancroft, and of [blank] Pigeon."

3. *i.e.* the indecent costume fashionable among many laymen in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and stigmatized by the Oxford Chancellor, Gascoigne, in words too plain for reproduction here (*Lib. l'evitatum*, p. 144). Visitors complain of this in Norwich diocese on other occasions: cf. pp. 201, 205, 263. Dr. Jessopp, (introd., p. xxi), entirely mistook the meaning of these words.

4. Norwich had five dependent cells: St. Leonard's, Aldby, Yarmouth, Lynn, and Hoxne.

5. One witness reports "*item*, the Brethren are wont to dance in the guessten-house, by favour of the guest-master, by night [and] up to noon." (p. 75).

6. *i.e.* the dead Bishop's soul was defrauded of the masses for which he had left endowment. The prelate here referred to is probably Walter de Suffield (1244-57), a great benefactor to the Cathedral, and so holy in his life that miracles were said to have been wrought at his tomb. On p. 73 a monk reports that other chantries were similarly neglected.

7. Synods and Visitors forbade frequently but ineffectually the wearing of all costly clothes or furs. Readers of Chaucer's Prologue will remember "of double worsted was his semi-cope."

26. The Prior of St. Leonard wastes the goods of his priory.¹
27. Dom Robert Worsted has had a child by a certain unmarried girl in Norwich.
28. The sick are compelled to celebrate mass, in spite of their infirmities.²
29. The Penitentiaries [*i.e.* official confessors] of the cathedral church are not discreet enough for that office.³
30. The cell of Aldby is in great ruin and is heavily burdened with debt.
31. The Prior of St. Leonard gives no account of his office as Master of the Hospital of St. Paul ; for two barns have fallen down by his negligence while he held that mastership.
32. The Subprior and Bedingham are suspected of incontinence with the wife of the Subprior's servant, with the wife of William Bevy, and with Pigeon's wife.
33. The officials have not rendered accounts of their income for two years past, and therefore the state of the finances is unknown.
34. The monks dance in the guesten-house.
35. In the cell of St. Leonard there arise and are continued quarrels and dissensions, with words of opprobrium.
36. The church [of St. Leonard's], dormitory, and chapterhouse are going to ruin ; the manors are going to ruin.⁴
37. The cell of Aldby is in debt to the extent of £10, by the Prior's confession.
38. The monastery [of Norwich] is in debt for 200 marks.

For all this, the only punishments rehearsed in the Bishop's injunctions are (1) that the Prior of St. Leonard's should be deposed, and not admitted to any other office in the Cathedral monastery ; and (2) that the Subprior "should warn his servant Robert not to let his wife come in future to the monastery" (p. 79). The visitations of 1492 and 1526 are scarcely more creditable to the monastery than this of 1514 : Dr. Jessopp's remarks about both these visitations are extremely misleading (*Introd.*, pp. xvii and xix ff).

1. The evidence reports that he renders no account of part of his income ; that he has allowed two barns to fall down for want of due repair, etc., etc.

2. The number of statutory masses, for the souls of past benefactors, was a heavy burden on any but an active community, and there is constant evidence for its neglect, *see* Jouenneaux on p. 27 above. The number of monks at Norwich was now sunk from sixty to thirty-eight (p. 73).

3. The evidence says "they know not to discern one leprosy from another" : *i.e.* they are unversed in the somewhat complicated system of ecclesiastical penances and absolutions.

4. *Patiuntur ruinam* ; *see* *Medieval Studies*, 1st series, 2nd ed., p. 87. *Mancia* is often used of manor-houses or similar buildings.

B. THE AUSTIN PRIORY, WALSINGHAM.

("Our Lady of Walsingham.")

HERE, as in many other cases, the Bishop has not officially passed judgment on the evidence by drawing up a list of "comperta." It will be best, therefore, to give in full the evidence of the first seven witnesses, and to quote from the rest only the most important items.

Dom Edmund Warham, Subprior, being questioned and examined, saith that the Prior hath never paid any moneys into the common chest within his term of office.

He saith also that the Brethren are disobedient, incorrigible, quarrelsome and indisciplined.

Dom Thomas Bynham, examined, saith that the Prior hath 1,000 sheep of his own private property, distinct from the sheep belonging to the priory.

He saith also that, if any of the Brethren please John Smyth and his wife, he pleaseth the Prior also; and whosoever displeaseth them displeaseth the Prior. And that Smyth's wife hath access alone to the priory, and (as is believed) to the Prior's bedchamber.

He saith that the Prior warned all the Canons together before the Visitation, that they should deliberate among themselves what they should depose or say at the Visitation, saying [to them] as followeth: "Take heed and beware; for the Lord Bishop will have jurisdiction for the time of the visitation; but when he is departed I shall reign again, in spite of him, and I shall look upon you according to the ill ye have deserved of me."¹

He saith that he believeth the Prior to possess 2,000 marks in coined money.

He saith that the priory tenements in the town of Walsingham are going to ruin [*patiuntur ruinam*].

Item, the sick are almost perishing [*quasi pereunt*] through neglect; for they have no provision beyond that which is provided for the healthy.

Item, Great George, one of the singers, bought a house for £50, and, as is said, the Prior gave and paid the money.²

Item, that John Smyth and Nicholas Marshall, the Prior's servants, are enriched and endowed from the priory property by favour of the Prior; for Nicholas hath bought lands to the value of £60 with the Prior's money, and Smyth is said to be worth 500 marks [*i.e.* more than £3,000 modern money].

Item, that the Prior oftentimes goeth alone in the dusk to the Chapel of our Lady; and, without the knowledge of any of the Brethren, he dealeth at his will with the money and jewels there received.³

1. *Juxta demerita*. Visitors and Synods legislated vainly against these temptations to conspiracy or intimidation: see *English Historical Review*, January, 1914, pp. 37-8.

2. This employment of choirboys, or even of choir-men, marks one of the stages of monastic decay in the later Middle Ages.

3. See Erasmus's account of this shrine in his Colloquies, *Peregrinatio Religionis Ergo*. He writes, with a certain amount of poetical licence, "Its name is most celebrated throughout England; nor can you easily find any Englishman who expects to prosper unless he gratify that Virgin yearly with some gift, as his wealth may permit."

Dom William Houghton, Guardian of our Lady's Chapel, saith that the Brethren are provided too sparingly with food, more especially in the matter of fish on fast-days.

He saith that the younger Brethren are disobedient ; especially Thomas Ringsted is disobedient to him, the deponent, who is his lawful superior.

Dom John Walsingham, third Prior, saith that the Prior said publicly in chapter-house among the Brethren "Doo the best that ye can and complayn what yee woll, it shall be never the better." And another time he said "And I wist that my lorde shulde be against me I shulde so provide that my Lorde [*i.e.* the Bishop] shulde doo me litle hurt." And another time he said, "When my lorde is goon I shall rule and aske him noon leave."

Examined as to the cause of the quarrels between the Prior and the Brethren, he saith that the Prior's servants, John Smyth and Nicholas Marshall, give occasion for all these discords ; and, concerning the substance of the said John Smyth and Nicholas Marshall, he agreeth with *Dom Thomas Bynham*.

He saith that many jewels, pertaining to our Lady's Chapel, are abstracted by the Prior.

He saith that the Prior keepeth Smyth's wife as his concubine.

Robert Angos of the Black Lion knoweth whereof to depose concerning the Prior's conversation ; so also knoweth Peter Burgate.

He saith that the Prior is too severe and cruel, both in word and in deed.

Dom Robert Parker, examined, agreeth as to the Prior's threatening words when he said [*blank in text*]. And he saith also that, on Corpus Christi last, the Prior assembled the Brethren in the chapterhouse, and said "My blessing on all who favour my part, and cursed be all who oppose me," and thus he went forth.

He saith that, every day, the Prior sendeth to Smyth's wife a dish of the best meats brought up to his table.

Also he goeth to the Chapel by night and taketh what he will, at his own pleasure.

He saith that the Prior hath an old fool ; and that he compelled this fool to put on a surplice and to walk publicly in a procession.

The Prior rebuilt a house for Great George the singer, whereon he spent £50.

The Prior smote a husbandman, from which blow the man died within a month.

The Prior hath sheep of his own at Montjoy ; nor doth he render an account of the income of Mountjoy nor is it applied to the uses of the monastery.

Silence is not kept.

Item, the Prior blabbeth to Smyth's wife all that is done in the chapterhouse.

Item, the tenements in Walsingham pertaining to the priory are going to ruin through the Prior's fault.

Smyth's wife keepeth the keys of the malt and corn-chamber.

Four Brethren—William Bettes, Thomas Wells, John Clenchwarton, and David Norwich—are riotous and undisciplined persons, and go about at will both by day and by night.

Item, the Prior goeth about without his habit in the church, on Sundays and feast-days, and cometh not to the choir.

Dom William Rase, examined, saith that Doms William Bettes, Thomas Wells, and John Clenchwarton go forth from the priory by night, and sit eating and drinking in John Smyth's house until eleven of the clock.

Item, that the Prior beareth the utmost malice towards this deponent, for that he called her [Smyth's wife] a whore; and that the Prior compelled him to beg her pardon publicly in the chapterhouse.

Item, that the Prior commanded this deponent, by the obedience that he owed him, to disclose and reveal to him whosoever should accuse him to my Lord Bishop.

Item, that the Prior commanded him by his obedience to write down in a scroll each and every point whereof he intended to make complaint to the Lord Bishop at his Visitation.

Item, that the Prior said in chapterhouse: "When my lorde of Norwiche is goon I shall turne every thing as I woll." And another time he said "If I knew my lorde wolde take parte withe you, I shall provide otherwise that he shall not hurt me."

Dom Thomas Lowthe, Chaplain of Creake, saith that the Prior has been too remiss in correcting. The deponent giveth yearly account of £18 from the revenue of Creake. *Dom Robert Parker* is disobedient, and would have struck the Prior yesterday. Divine service is laudably kept, both by night and by day.¹

Dom John Lowe agreeth with *Dom William Rase* concerning the Prior's threatening words. *Item*, he saith that the prior is lavish in giving monastery goods without the Chapter's consent. *Item*, the Prior goeth by night to our Lady's Chapel and taketh what he will without the counsel of the seniors. *Item*, a pair of amber beads hath been stolen.² *Item*, the Prior smote a serf, who died of that blow. *Item*, John Smyth's wife buyeth fish in the market for the convent, to the scandal of the priory. *Item*, she hath kept the keys of the malt and corn-chambers, and taketh what she will. *Item*, she is called the Prior's lady, and hath of the best food and wine. *Item*, Doms Richard Docking, William Bettes, John Clenchwarton, Thomas Wells and David Norwich are of the Prior's part, and fawn and flatter him; moreover they sit up eating and drinking even unto mattins in John Smyth's house; and when they are come to mattins they sleep all the while. *Item*, *Dom William Hutton* cometh not to choir, but sitteth all day in the house commonly called "the halibred hous,"³ eating and drinking daily therein. *Item*, he saith that

1. The Prior was William Lowthe, and this witness was probably his brother or cousin. It will be noted that his evidence is very exceptionally favourable to the Prior.

2. Dr. Jessopp prints *unum par ferularum de amber*; but "dishes of amber" are most improbable, and *par precularum* is the regular medieval phrase for a rosary.

3. Probably the room in which the holy wafers were made and baked for the Eucharist.

the Prior in chapterhouse, without any previous monition, excommunicated all that opposed him and blessed those that favoured him. *Item*, the Prior is too severe and cruel.

Dom William Bettes saith that *Dom Thomas Ringsted* frequently wandereth about the town and drinketh in the houses of layfolk. That *James's Drye's* wife hath on divers occasions had suspicious access to *Dix*.¹ That there is a division between the Brethren. That the Subprior will not permit the Brethren to go shooting in the fields for a recreation on the day of their bloodletting.²

Dom Richard Docking saith that there is dissension among the Brethren: examined as to the cause thereof, he saith that it is by reason of idleness and overmuch liberty. That the Brethren are disobedient. That *Dom Thomas Ringsted* is disobedient and incorrigible in all things. That the schoolmaster hath not the correction of the juniors and novices, but the Subprior enjoineth fasting upon the novices. That, by reason of this laxity of correction,³ the juniors are the more indisciplined and the less given to books.

Dom Thomas Ringsted agreeth with *Rase*, as above, concerning the threatening words uttered by the Prior on Corpus Christi Day. He saith also that the wife of *Grene* the wool-stapler of *Walsingham* related this day to the present deponent and to *Parker*, the Sacrist, that, about midnight of this last night, the said *Grene* and his wife, being then awake, saw certain men bearing and carrying divers things from *John Smythe's* house to the house of *William Wandam* the Prior's steward. That *John Smyth*, Caterer, is seneschal of the Prior's courts, and sitteth in court, and his wife hath charge of the malt and corn. *Item*, that the said *Smyth* hath built a stately [*decentem*] house in *Houghton* at the cost of the Priory; and, this year, three two-horse waggons of wool, pertaining to the priory, were brought to that house. *Item*, that *Nicholas Marshall* is the Prior's chamberlain and overseer of all things, and choirman in the chapel, and he is exceedingly burdensome to the priory, and unprofitable, and is enriched with priory goods. *Item*, that the prior, in public chapter, excommunicated all the Brethren that opposed him and blessed all his favourers and friends. *James Gresham*, *John Coppinger*, *John Weston*, *Thomas Keswick*, *Robert Browne*, *Stephen Browne*, *Robert Angos* and *William Grene* could give evidence as to the monastic finances and the Prior's manner of life. (Let the Lord Bishop look at all the Prior's cups and basins and goblets). That the Prior hath given no account of the priory expenses since his accession to office, nor hath he paid any moneys into the common chest within that time. Concerning the possessions of *Smyth* and *Marshall* he agreeth with the rest. The Prior goeth to and from our Lady's Chapel at his will, and taketh what

1. From this mention, and that in *Ailesham's* evidence, it is pretty clear that *Dix* was the *alias* of one of the Brethren; cf. p. 88 (*Thetford*) "*Frater Ricardus Downham alias Norse*."

2. *In die sanguinum*, to which *Dr. Jessopp* somewhat helplessly adds a bracketed query "(24 March?)" as though it were some holy day. The periodical bloodlettings were, in these later days of medieval monasticism, officially treated as *recreallones*, and looked forward to as such.

3. So the deponent seems to mean by his phrase *pretextu facilitatis correctionis*.

he will. Dom W. Houghton, guardian of our Lady's Chapel, is useless and cometh not to mattins; he hath been absent sixty times this year.¹ Smyth's wife hath a dish of the Prior's choicest meats daily. *Item*, the four hired choirmen have, besides their bread and salaries, daily meats and dishes [taken] to their own houses. Moreover, the said Ringsted confesseth that he fell under the sentence of excommunication for concealing certain of the abovementioned things at the last visitation; whereof the Lord Bishop [now] absolved him, giving him as a penance to say the Psalter once through beyond his statutory repetitions thereof.

Dom John Ailesham, examined, agreeth with respect to the Prior's threatening words in chapter, adding that the Prior said also "I had lever spende the substance of this house then ye shulde have your intente."² Deponent agreeth with the other Brethren as to the entrance by night into our Lady's Chapel, which he himself hath seen. He saith that the Prior, when he went to London, gave and delivered to Smyth's wife the keys of the malt and corn chambers. *Item*, this deponent, at the Prior's bidding, gave the Sacrament of the Eucharist to the Prior's fool, who was not wont to communicate. The Prior, the Subprior, and Dix are guardians of the keys of the common chest. John the son of Gresham of Walsingham, rebuked one of the Brethren for sitting in the town at an undue hour; to whom that Brother thus made answer: "As long as I do noo wors then our fader prior doithe he can not rebuke me." The Prior loveth not the students, saying that they are minded to overturn religion.³ John Smith and Nicholas Marshall are unprofitable servants to the priory. The Prior hath brought quicklime from his own servant Nicholas Marshall, and hath possessions of his own, to the prejudice of the priory. Smyth's wife rode to Canterbury on the Prior's horse. He agreeth with the rest concerning the dishes sent daily to Smyth's wife from the Prior's table.

Dom Thomas Ipswiche agreeth with respect to the Prior's words; and as to his access to the Chapel by night or by dusk, he agreeth also, saying that he hath oftentimes seen it. The Prior is not benign or courteous to the Brethren, but severe and cruel; his servants scorn the Brethren and set them at naught; no Canon can complain against any of the servants or against their contempt, but he is forthwith clapped into prison. *Item*, John Smyth showed three sovereigns in Dom Thomas Bynham's chamber, and said that my Lord St. John⁴ had sent them to him; and Symth's wife wears rings on her fingers which (as she saith)

1. *i.e.* since March 25th. This visitation took place on July 14th to 15th.

2. He would employ the resources of the monastery in fighting the Bishop and his adversaries in the law courts.

3. Prior non diligit studentes, dicens eos esse in animo subvertendi religionem. This, and other plain indications of monastic neglect of learning in these Norwich Visitations, are enough to dispose of the modern contention that the monasteries were really centres of progress, and that they objected to the New Learning only on account of its identification with Lutheranism. This Visitation, which occurred four years before Luther's arrival upon the scene, entirely bears out the impression given by Erasmus.

4. *Dominum Sancti Johannis.*

my Lord St. John sent unto her. The Prior's servants steal food from the dishes set before the Brethren at table.

Dom Nicholas Mitcham saith that he feareth for his life, by reason of the malice of the Brethren who favour the Prior. As to the Prior's threatening words, he agreeth with the last witness. Doms T. Lowthe, William Bettes, and T. Wells are frequently hunting and hawking. The Prior hath smitten his Brethren, contrary to the Rule of Religion; also a hind, an husbandman, of which blow he died. *Item*, the Prior maintaineth the servants against the Brethren. *Item*, deponent complaineth of unwholesome and scanty food. *Item*, the Prior hath sold priory lands and hath rendered no account of the moneys. *Item*, the Prior hath threatened to build prisons for ten of his Brethren.

Dom William Myleham, deacon, complaineth of the drink mingled with salt, and likewise of the food. Doms Thomas Wells, William Bettes, David Norwich and Richard Docking rise not for mattins, nor do they devoutly say their offices, by permission and sufferance of the Prior; for the Prior upholdeth these and scorneth the rest. Last evening, Dom Thomas Wells would have struck this deponent.

Dom John Clenchwarton, the Prior's chaplain, saith that all things are done laudably. He saith that Dom William Rase is a proprietary¹; for he hid money in his sleeve when he was sent to prison.

Dom Nicholas Cambridge saith that the Prior boasteth that he will build a prison for ten of the Brethren who favour him not. Nicholas hath worn the royal cap with a hole in it which, as is believed, was wont to hang in Our Lady's Chapel. The Prior singeth and suppeth in John Smyth's house to his own scandal and that of the Priory. He saith that Wells and Bettes climb the walls by night to go in and out.

Dom David Norwich, deacon, saith that Dom Thomas Ringsted frequenteth suspiciously the house of a certain Angos.

Dom John Ailesham absenteth himself from mattins once a week.

Dom Robert Sall, deacon, saith that Bettes, Wells, and Clenchwarton sit up by night drinking, and rise not to mattins, and when they are present they slumber and sleep.

Dom John Walsingham, professed, saith that all is well.

Dom Robert Creike, a scholar [at the University], saith that he knoweth little, for he hath been absent for almost two years.

Dom Thomas Wells, priest, saith that Doms Nicholas Myleham and William Myleham steal² the Prior's wine, and other things as well.

Robert Wiley, a novice, saith that he hath all things necessary.

William Gabbey, a novice, is of the same mind.

1. The best known of the many edicts on this subject are those of Innocent III, first at the fourth Lateran Council and again to the convent of Subiaco, embodied in the *Corpus Juris*. (*Decret. Greg.*, lib. III, tit. xxxv, cap. 2, 6). After decreeing first excommunication and then expulsion against all Religious who hoarded private property, he adds "If any be found, at death, to possess such property, let it be buried with him outside the monastery in some dunghill, in sign of his damnation, even as St. Gregory, in his Dialogue, recounteth himself to have done."

2. Dr. Jessopp's *furuntur* is doubtless a misprint for *furantur*.

INJUNCTIONS.

THE Lord Bishop enjoined the Prior to remove John Smyth and Nicholas Marshall from the Priory and town of Walsingham within the week.

Item, he warned him, under legal penalty, never to punish any [of the Brethren] thereafter for that which they had said and deposed at the time of the Visitation.

Item, that he should not punish any of the Brethren unless the accusations be made known to the other Brethren publicly in the Chapter-house.

Item, he enjoined the said Prior to render a faithful account and true indentures of the goods of the Monastery, by Christmas next.

Item, he enjoineth him to remove the woman who dwelleth at the Bull Inn, by the Feast of Michaelmas next following.

Item, my Lord appointed the Prior of Westacre as coadjutor of the Prior for the avoidance of quarrels, and made the Prior of Walsingham swear that he would receive nothing of the fruits and revenues of the said Monastery, nor of its spiritual nor temporal possessions, except by consent of the Prior of Westacre.

Item, that he should not punish any of the Brethren without the consent of this same Prior of Westacre.

Item, my Lord made the aforesaid Prior of Westacre swear, with his hand on the Holy Gospels of God, that he would not reveal the secrets of the said monastery of Walsingham.

After which Injunctions, and the aforesaid business being finished, my Lord prorogued and postponed his Visitation to the fifth day of March next ensuing, if it be a day of legal business: otherwise to the first legal day thereafter following and with reservation of any other days ensuing which may be needed for its postponement and prorogation.

C. VISITATION OF ST. BENET AT HULME.

THIS was less unfavourable than the other three, and the complaints may be greatly abbreviated. The Abbot, it appears, neglected to render due account of the revenues. Valuable plate had disappeared during the interregnum between two abbots; the Brethren had entered into a conspiracy to give no evidence at the Visitation, the house was in debt, the Sub-Prior had said that he would like to poison the Abbot, the Prior was not accustomed to come to mattins, "*item*, that the mason's wife had frequently suspicious access to the Prior's chamber, and that Dom John Thaxted can give fuller evidence here: *item*, that many suspicious women come to the chambers of the Prior and Andrew Walsham . . . *item*, that the Prior gave counsel to the Brethren that they should reveal nothing [at the Visitation]." [p. 127]. The novices were reported as disobedient, there was often no monk fit to celebrate mass, there was no general inventory of the convent property, the church

ornaments were out of repair, and finally, Dom Roger Multon "is a stirrer-up of strife, and was seven years at Cambridge and did no good there."

The Bishop's Injunctions record no punishment, except that "Cowper, [the Sub-Prior], seeing that he hath lost two pieces of silver plate and two mazers, must pay £4 to the Brethren at the rate of twenty shillings per annum."

IV.

French Monasticism in the Seventeenth Century.

IN 1603, a hundred years after this booklet of Jouenneaux, Cardinal Richelieu was a youth of eighteen; and he has left the following description of those days in his *Testament Politique*, addressed at the end of his life to the King whom he had served so long. (Section 1.) "When I remember how, in my youth, I saw noblemen and other laymen possessing *in commendam* not only the majority of priories and abbeys, but also some of the parish livings and bishoprics—and when, again, I consider how, in my earliest years, so great licence reigned in the monasteries of monks and nuns that one met with nothing but scandals and evil examples in the majority of these places where we ought to seek edification—then I confess that it consoles me not a little to see that these disorders have been so completely banished during your reign; that the *commendam* system and the disorder of monasteries are more rare now than, in those days, legitimate possessors were, or Religious who led good lives." The changes of which Richelieu here speaks, like all the important events of Louis XIII's reign since 1624, were due not to the king himself but to his great minister.

An admirable study of these reforms has been recently published by Dom Paul Denis, as the first volume of the *Bibliothèque d'Histoire Bénédictine*, under the title of "Le Cardinal de Richelieu et la Réforme des Monastères Bénédictins" (Paris, 1913). Dom Denis devotes a good many pages to Richelieu's attempts to reform Chezal-Benoît. "This Congregation," (he writes), "like all the rest, had fallen into a lamentable state of relaxation. . . . Dom Mercier [Abbot of St. Vincent at le Mans, and Visitor General to the whole Congregation] attempted to suppress, in his own abbey, the vice of private property, the monks' walks in the town, their rich feasts, the luxury of their clothing, and their gambling: but his monks had been so long accustomed to these things that they considered them as vested rights, and fought for them with that fierce energy which self-indulgence can display in its own defence; they even denounced their Abbot to the Parlement of Paris." In 1636, after a desperate struggle of four years, Richelieu and the reforming minority of Chezal-Benoît succeeded in uniting this Congregation with the reformed Benedictines of St. Maur. Nothing short of that great minister's tact and determination, as Dom Denis confesses, could have brought about so happy a result (pp. 117-134).

The relaxation of some other Orders was, however, still worse; and Richelieu's reforms were in those cases less permanently successful. "St. Médard de Soissons was reduced to a pitiable state. Only eight monks were left in the monastery [which had once had fifty or sixty at

least]; these had indeed made their profession according to the Rule of St. Benedict, yet in reality they followed no rule at all. The conventual buildings were all uninhabitable; the beautiful cloister was choked with rubbish; the vault of the refectory had fallen in; the chapter-house was much dilapidated, and grass grew in the dormitory. . . . The ancient church having fallen into utter ruin, the abbot who held the monastery *in commendam* had employed a heretic as architect for the new church, and this person had found nothing better than to build it after the pattern of a protestant meeting-house. In the sacristy, nothing was to be found but an alb and a pewter chalice" (p. 166). Still worse was the state of the almost equally celebrated abbey of St. Savin (p. 168). Richelieu brought to the reform of these glaring abuses the same qualities which enabled him to subdue la Rochelle; and in those individual cases he generally succeeded. But the reformation of whole Orders was a far more difficult task; and the successes which he gained, however important and impressive, were not always lasting. Dom Denis confesses that the reform of the Praemonstratensians, begun before Richelieu's ministry and continued by him, was almost altogether frustrated by the opposition of the old monks during his lifetime and after his death (pp. 203-9). With the far more powerful Cluniacs and Cistercians, he found a difficulty which even the most orthodox reformer could never escape—the practical impossibility of effecting any real reform by strictly constitutional means—so impregnable were they entrenched behind a network of papal and royal exemptions and privileges. Even if our Henry VIII had been as orthodox as St. Louis, the problem would still have been almost as insoluble to him as it was to Richelieu; and Dom Denis frankly approves the unconstitutional methods to which the great minister was driven in his fight against these inveterate abuses (184-5). Yet, though Richelieu was still struggling, even on his death-bed, to secure the durability of the reforms which he had introduced among the Cistercians, he had not been a year in his grave before the old monks, supported by the Prince de Condé, succeeded in reversing everything, and "the work of reform undertaken by Richelieu died from that single blow" (p. 201).

The Cluniacs were in as bad a state as the Cistercians, or worse. "Louis XIII, who was present at High Mass in the abbey church [of Cluny] one day in 1619, was much shocked by the ill-behaviour of the monks. . . . Their most innocent diversions were gaming and hunting; and often nothing but prison could restrain their excesses" (p. 217). Richelieu strove hard to procure the union of the Cluniacs with the lately-reformed Benedictine Congregation of St. Maur: but he found endless difficulties, not only with the parties interested, but also at Rome. Meanwhile the need of some reform was imperative. About the year 1636, "Dom Tarsisse sent to Dom Placide Le Simon a series of documents containing complaints against the commendatory Priors of the Cluniacs, which prove the desolation of their priories, suppression of divine service, ruin of the 'conventual' system, lamentable state of the buildings, breaches of morality, etc.; and this was the situation of almost all the Cluniac houses! Already a few Canonical Visitations have been made

to these disorderly places, which hitherto had been visited only in pure formality; for the culprits had taken care to offer the Visitors presents to close their eyes. The things discovered at these Visitations have been frightful" (p. 312). Face to face with the most powerful minister France ever had, and domiciled in a city of which the temporal ruler was the Pope himself, the Prior of St. Martial d'Avignon prosecuted to the very last a career of successful villainy. As early as 1615, his subject Brethren had denounced this man's immoralities and peculations to the Pope. Flesh-eating in Lent was among his minor peccadilloes. Yet "this prior, who lived as, unfortunately, many of the elder monks of Cluny were living at that time, had the incredible dexterity to maintain himself in office until his death, in the middle of the year 1643." In spite of his lifelong prodigality, he died worth from 30,000 to 40,000 crowns (p. 321). After six years of negotiations with Rome, during which Richelieu showed infinite tact and patience, "at the beginning of 1642, the secret and long-unconfessed motive which had caused these endless procrastinations, was revealed with brutal frankness—the fear lest the reform of the Cluniac Order should diminish the revenues of the Papal Datary" (p. 358). To make an end of a long story, the Cardinal succeeded finally in creating a Congregation of Reformed Cluniacs, which lasted until the Revolution; but the majority went on a little worse, if anything, than before (p. 381). Nothing can better express the essential hopelessness of any radical and durable reform, under the then ecclesiastical conditions, than the words in which Dom Denis sums up Richelieu's personal achievements (p. 378). "If we were called upon for a final proof, (a proof *a posteriori*, it might be called), of the Cardinal's beneficent and tutelary action upon Benedictine reform, we should only have to cast a glance of general survey over the events which immediately followed his death. From one end of France to the other, there was a veritable monastic revolt; everywhere the elder monks, who had unwillingly suffered the introduction of reformed Brethren into their monasteries, thought the moment now come for ridding themselves of an importunate example of virtue and regular observance which was a standing reproach to their self-indulgence. The redoubtable Master was no longer there to repress the rebels." And Denis quotes from a letter of Colbert to Mazarin in 1655: "I speak, my Lord, of the resolve which your Lordship would do well to take with regard to the Order of Cluny, the re-establishment whereof was undertaken with great care and labour by the late Lord Cardinal de Richelieu, and even carried out, but upon such insecure foundations (not being supported by the authority of the Holy See) that, immediately after his death, being bereft of his powerful protection, it has received such rude shocks that, within a brief space, it has reduced itself, of its own accord, to a worse state than that wherein it lay when the said Cardinal was invited to lend his powerful aid." Of the Reformed Cluniacs, pursues Colbert, only fourteen houses yet remain, while "in all the houses occupied by the elder monks we see plainly all the fruits of quarrelsome litigation, evil life, the dilapidation of many buildings, the lack of obedience and of regular control; to the great scandal of all the towns wherein such houses are situate, and of the

whole surrounding countryside " (p. 381). Scarcely less, if at all, were the disorders in the other Congregations which Richelieu had striven so hard to reform—Marmoutier and Chaise-Dieu (p. 382-4).

We owe all this plain-speaking, it must again be noted, to an orthodox modern monk of St. Benedict, who has had the courage to face the actual documents ; and the facts are all the more instructive, because they agree so closely with a mass of equally orthodox visitation documents of the Middle Ages, ranging from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, and covering all the most civilized countries of Europe.

V.

Monasticism in the Cahiers of 1789.

IN 1789, when the States General were convoked by Louis XVI, every parish and every corporation in France was asked to send a list of proposals for reform in the body politic. About 50,000 of these *Cahiers* were sent in to the King. They give a most remarkable picture of French society; and their definitely orthodox tone makes their evidence especially valuable in church matters.¹ Champion thus summarizes their evidence as to the monasteries: "The Religious Orders, 'sick unto death,' were in utter decay; and the Clergy imputed their gradual destruction to the law which forbade the taking of monastic vows before the age of twenty-one; to another law which prescribed that every monastery should be suppressed which was not 'conventualis,' possessing at least nine effective and professed monks²; and, finally, to the unions which disregarded the objects of the founders in order to enrich bishoprics and opulent chapters.³ It was not only in Lorraine that there were abbeys so depopulated that 'scarcely any services were said there at all' and that 'we have a great number of almost useless monasteries' . . . The nobility of Montargis advised the 'total and absolute' suppression of the Monastic Orders. . . . In the most distant provinces—at Arles, at Brest, and under the Pyrenees, the Third Estate uses similar language. Almost everywhere, we hear more or less distinctly that which is expressed with singular precision by the nobility of Vivarais, in the Cahier entrusted to the Comte de Vogüé and the Comte d'Antraigues. They say 'the motives which, in the remote past, authorized the establishment of monastic bodies, no longer exist; and these bodies, drifting away from the spirit of their foundation, have rendered their existence and their wealth prejudicial to the State; let them therefore be forbidden to receive further novices, and let each monastery be allowed to secularize its inmates if they choose . . . Their possessions shall be spent on charitable objects.'" Compare this with the words of a still

1. See Edme Champion. *La France d'après les Cahiers de 1789* (Paris, Colin, 4th ed., 1911, 31 50), esp. pp. 21, 177ff.

2. For this word see the present author's *Medieval Studies*, 1st Series, 2nd ed., p. 86. In the Middle Ages, the number required for a "conventual" monastery was usually twelve; it was estimated that no smaller number was likely to form an effective "conventus" to perform duly the statutory services, and to keep proper monastic discipline. The French State, before the Revolution, had been obliged to take very nearly the same measures which Cromwell took, in Henry VIII's name, before the Suppression in England.

3. Many smaller monasteries had thus been swallowed up long before the Revolution, just as Henry V and Wolsey had incorporated many English monastic foundations with colleges and other corporations.

more orthodox English churchman in 1450—Thomas Gascoigne, Chancellor of Oxford University. "I firmly believe that it would be a holy work for the Pope to appropriate the superfluous possessions of monasteries, and great colleges [of priests], and cathedrals to parish churches and to the clergy who labour therein; in which parishes, for different reasons, men and souls are now perishing" (*Lib. Veritatum*, ed. Rogers, p. 4).

To these evidences from 1503, 1514, 1603-55, and 1789 may be added a common-sense reflection suggested in 1870 to J. R. Green, who was then living at San Remo. Less than ten years before this, one of the first acts of united Italy had been to suppress the monasteries. Green writes home: "The monks have gone of course, but a few Capuchins remain, and their retention shows how impossible the suppression of monasteries [in England] would have been had their occupants had the least life in them. When the cholera attacked San Remo all the priests and monks fled in a body save the Capuchins, and so strong was the gratitude they won that San Remo nearly rose in revolt at the news of their suppression, and prevailed on the Government to sanction their exceptional retention of their old monastery" (*Letters*, ed. Leslie Stephen, 1901, p. 267).

This, then, is the one thread running through the very miscellaneous documents, of widely different dates, strung together in this present booklet. The author is painfully conscious of the delays which are likely to elapse before the publication even of the first volume of his *History of Monasticism in the Later Middle Ages*. This first volume, dealing with St. Bernard and the early Cistercians, will, it is hoped, show the monks at their best. No account of monasticism can be satisfactory which does not attempt to explain how it became one of the great civilizing forces of medieval Europe—it may perhaps be said of St. Bernard's age, the greatest of those civilizing forces. On the other hand, no account can be true which assumes that this vast and time-honoured institution could be overthrown among us, at one single blow, simply by the caprice of a tyrant and the greed of his courtiers. Until some attempt has been made to write the history of later medieval monasticism in the light of those official documents which survive in so great numbers—until someone has done for Plantagenet and Tudor England what Dom Paul Denis has done for Richelieu's France—the real necessity of the suppression in England can be deduced only from such scattered evidence as I have here strung together. The very difference of dates and of countries, from this point of view, adds to the cogency of the evidence. At no date, and in no country, have the monasteries themselves, or even the church herself, been able to bring any lasting reform into monastic life. The State, sooner or later, has always had to intervene with some measure of disestablishment and disendowment. The revelations of Jouenneaux should be compared with those of Mr. McCabe in his "Twelve Years

in a Monastery"; a book all the more valuable because Mr. McCabe, in those years at any rate, evidently knew little of strictly medieval monastic conditions. If the modern monasteries are so much superior to those of 1503 or of 1603, this is not only, or even mainly, due to the advance of general civilization and social decency. It is mainly because the monastery now offers no great temptations to ambition, and because the monk is no longer defended from the operation of ordinary statute law. The institution, therefore, will soon find its own level when the artificial effect of the sudden migration from France has died away. Within the Anglican communion, institutions like that of Mirfield rival the best days of medieval monasticism; Roman Catholics, on the other hand, are learning a breadth of view which was impossible under medieval conditions, and without prejudice to their essential spiritual outlook. While monks and nuns become less numerous, their vocation becomes more definite; and modern Europe has no reason to lament the breaking down of the old barriers, though we may sincerely regret that the methods of Henry VIII's suppression were the bad old methods of the Middle Ages.

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